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Full Name of Author — Nom complet de l'auteur: Marguerite Kathleen Garstin

Date of Birth — Date de naissance: Sept. 25 1952

Country of Birth — Lieu de naissance: Canada

Permanent Address — Résidence fixe:
636 Trail St.
Kimberley B.C. V1A 2M2

Title of Thesis — Titre de la thèse: Alain Robbe-Grillet's Visual Techniques, 1949-1970: Affinities with Metaphysical Painting, Surrealism and Pop Art

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# Alain Robbe-Grillet's Visual Techniques, 1949-1970 : Affinities with Metaphysical Painting, Surrealism, and Pop Art

by

Marguerite Kathleen Garstin

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A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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Supervisor

Milan V. Dimic

Ulrich Weisstein

External Examiner

Date September 29 1984

This thesis is dedicated to Merrilee Cohen who taught me to "see" so much, and who has provided me with the emotional, moral, and intellectual support which enabled me to continue my work for many years, before and during the writing of the thesis.

Above all I wish to thank two dear friends who in "the worst of times" held in front of me always the image of life worth living, Ginger and Tuptin Garstin.

I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to University Professor Henry Kreisel for providing me with a supportive atmosphere of intellectual freedom without which this work could never have been completed.

# Abstract

This thesis examines the novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet, written between 1949 and 1970, to determine their use of visual technique, and their relationships to modern art movements such as metaphysical painting, surrealism, and pop art, concentrating on the work of painters such as Giorgio de Chirico, René Magritte, Andy Warhol, and Roy Lichtenstein.

A leading representative of the group of French nouveaux romanciers, Robbe-Grillet is at the forefront of international developments in post-modernist fiction, exploiting, among other methods, different visual techniques in the novel. He outlines and expounds upon his ideas about fiction and the visual in the collection of essays Pour un nouveau roman, and in other scattered articles and interviews. To justify a study of the relationships between Robbe-Grillet's novels and the visual arts, and to aid in arriving at an appropriate critical methodology, this thesis first looks at his statements about visual technique in fiction and his expression of interest in some forms of painting. His close acquaintance with the paintings in the private collection of Jean Paulhan, the work of de Chirico's early Paris years from 1911-15, establishes his direct knowledge of the art of this metaphysical painter. The surrealists greatly influenced his writing, an affinity that, he believes, may be understood as a similar sensibilité, while he also suggests certain formal and

iconographical similarities between his experiences as an author and the pop art of Lichtenstein.

Robbe-Grillet's visual techniques, as they are manifested in his novels, are discussed in the third chapter: his use of the language of pictorial composition, such as point, line, and perspective, his demonstrated awareness of the effects of visual perception, his incorporation of visual artifacts such as paintings, etchings, and photographs into the deep and surface structure of the text, and his depiction of light as a correlative to the Heideggarian notion of Nichts.

Robbe-Grillet's essays on the minor surrealist writers Joë Bousquet and Raymond Roussel indicate his interest in the verist as opposed to the automatist branch of surrealist painting, the verists such as Magritte and Delvaux having been greatly influenced by de Chirico's metaphysical art. Robbe-Grillet's early novels, Un Régicide, Les Gommes, and Le Voyeur, exhibit a considerable affinity both iconographically and structurally with de Chirico's painting. Similar relationships with Warhol's and Lichtenstein's pop art of the first half of the 1960's are demonstrated in La Maison de rendez-vous and Projet pour une révolution à New York. Like de Chirico, Warhol, and Lichtenstein, Robbe-Grillet rejects accepted mimetic canons; his use of redundancy to break down traditional narrative codes is similar to the visual artist's employment of serialism to destroy accepted visual codes. Robbe-Grillet's fiction and de Chirico's, Warhol's, and Lichtenstein's paintings all attempt to establish new aesthetic codes, and in the process their work demonstrates ideological, thematic, and formal affinities.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

The introduction to Jean Ricardou's book Nouveaux problèmes du roman (1978), offers an explanation for his choice of title and approach by defining the various phases of the nouveau roman,[1] in which Alain Robbe-Grillet's fiction and theoretical postulations have played a central role. The French literary phenomenon of the nouveau roman is both a major source and a guiding force of post-modernism in the novel, on an international scale, and while it is extremely difficult to designate with precision and nuance a school of the nouveau roman, Ricardou's interpretation of the different phases of the new novel offers a reasonable explication of diverse authors within a certain parameter by confining the definition to process rather than to result. The first phase of experimentation, and the redefinition of the novel form, began with Nathalie Saurraute's novel Tropismes (1939),[2] and the essays, originally published between 1947 and 1956, L'Ère du soupçon,[3] where she notes that the writer and reader share a growing suspicion of the attributes of the Balzacian character, resulting in a new form of fiction where the character loses name, personality and description, to be replaced by an invisible and anonymous "I." Publications by Sarraute, Michel Butor, Roland Barthes, and Ricardou[4] eventually created a critical activity which made it possible to analyse and support certain experimental novels, otherwise strongly attacked at the time of their publication:

---

[1] Jean Ricardou, Nouveaux problèmes du roman (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978), pp. 9-12.

[2] Nathalie Sarraute, Tropismes (1939; rpt. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1957).

[3] Nathalie Sarraute, L'Ère du soupçon (Paris: Gallimard, 1956).

> . . . soit de façon anodine, qu'ils aient été attaqués par une critique tapageusement rétrograde et tout affairée à maintenir une panoplie de conformismes très datés; soit, de façon pernicieuse, qu'ils aient été applaudis par une critique apparemment moderne et tout occupée à en restreindre les nouveautés decisives.[5]

Once the originality and the importance of this narrative fiction was established and accepted in certain critical circles, the second and third phases of development took place, uniting these works in a loose collectivity. With the 1971 _colloque_ at Cerisy the notion of the _nouveau roman_ was determined by the unanimous acceptance of certain novelists, and the rejection of others, who might be termed _nouveau romanciers_, permitting "la précise mise en rigueur empirique de la collectivité dite Nouveau Roman." The third phase that, according to Ricardou, solidified this collectivity was the theoretical delineation expressed in his book _Le Nouveau roman_(1973). But the fourth phrase, the result of the other three, which Ricardou explores in _Nouveaux problèmes du roman_ within a framework of reorientation and revaluation, highlights the attributes of evolution and development, the idea that fiction should look constantly to the future, rather than ossify in outmoded forms of the past.

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[4] Michel Butor, _Essais sur le roman_, Collection Idées (Paris: Gallimard, 1969); Roland Barthes, _Essais critiques_ (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964); Jean Ricardou, _Problèmes du nouveau roman_ (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967).

[5] Jean Ricardou, _Nouveaux problèmes du roman_, p. 10.

Robbe-Grillet's approach to the new form of the novel is succinctly explicated in his essay "Sur quelques notions perimées" (1957) where he devastates what are to him obsolete notions about character, story, form and content, and commitment in fiction, in favour of the work of art which itself poses the problem of invention and creation.[1] For instance, in the character "type," predominant in Balzac and so thoroughly analysed by György Lukács, Robbe-Grillet sees a representation of retrograde individualism. In a less anthropocentric world:

> Le roman paraît chanceler, ayant perdu son meilleur soutien d'autrefois, le héros. S'il ne parvient pas à s'en remettre, c'est que sa vie était liée à celle d'une société maintenant revolue. S'il y parvient au contraire, une nouvelle voie s'ouvre pour lui, avec la promesse de nouvelles découvertes. (p. 28)

The future of the novel lies with the anti-hero, just as it lies with a new kind of plot, where the movement of the style is more important than the events themselves, and the collusion between author and reader that the prefabricated schema of illusion will be accepted as reality is no longer taken for granted. The type of formalism Robbe-Grillet espouses is not delineated by an excessive concern for form at the expense of the story, the usual reproach directed at such fiction; instead, he is interested in a fiction whose content is determined by the style, in other words where form takes precedence over content, but not at the expense of content. Finally, on the notion of commitment in literature, Robbe-Grillet points out that social problems obviously cannot be solved in the same manner as literary problems, with a bow in the direction of Sartre who advocated a moral literature, rather than a politicized, moralizing literature, which would escape propaganda by returning the reader to his liberty. Unfortunately, Sartre's approach proved to be utopian, and Robbe-Grillet suggests that the only viable form of commitment for the writer is "la pleine conscience des problèmes actuels de son propre langage, la conviction de leur extrême importance, la volonté de les résoudre de l'intérieur" (p. 39).

---

[1] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Sur quelques notions perimées," Pour un nouveau roman (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1963), pp. 25-44. All further references are to this edition of the essay and appear in the text.

The sense that the writer must continually reach for the fictional form of the future, or at least look towards it, results in Robbe-Grillet's delineation of visual technique as part of a new novel, summarized briefly as the bringing together of the visual and the verbal: "l'adjectif optique, descriptif, celui qui se contente de mesurer, de situer, de limiter, de définir."[7] In the essays published under the title Pour un nouveau roman, he talks about visual description in fiction: the eye which rests on objects without appropriating them, the subjectivity of the sense of sight which is man's only reliable way of defining his situation in the world, the over-abundance of visual detail which makes objects opaque and reduces their anthropomorphic content, the narrative structuring of point of view through "l'oeil d'homme," the differentiation between the anthropomorphism of colour and light and the independence of shape and outline, and the instantaneous image which halts the action and thus brings about a visual oasis in the middle of a verbal diegesis.

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[7] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Une Voie pour le roman futur," Pour un nouveau roman, p. 23.

However, the very specific nature of his ideas about the visual, expressed in these essays, and in certain published interviews has been neither noted nor analysed. This is a somewhat surprising state of affairs, especially as a critic such as Roland Barthes raises the issue in his two celebrated essays on Robbe-Grillet "Littérature objective," and "Littérature littérale," published in 1954 and 1955 respectively. In the first essay Barthes discusses certain of Robbe-Grillet's techniques which are analogous to modern painting, noting also that: "Robbe-Grillet ne permet jamais un débordement de l'optique par le viscéral, il coupe impitoyablement le visuel de ses relais."[1] In "Littérature littérale" he determines that there is a visual, spatial system in Le Voyeur:

> ". . . le dessein profond de Robbe-Grillet est de rendre compte de toute l'étendue objective, comme si la main du romancier suivait étroitement son regard dans une appréhension exhaustive des lignes et des surfaces . . . . le retour de certains objets, de certains fragments d'espace, privilégiés par leur répétition même, constitue à lui seul une faille, ce

---

[1] Roland Barthes, "Littérature objective," Essais critiques, p. 32.

> qu'on pourrait appeler un premier point de blettissement dans le système optique du romancier . . . .[9]

Barthes not only draws analogies between Robbe-Grillet's early novels and certain forms in painting, he mentions visual technique as well, frequently in terms close to those employed by Robbe-Grillet in Pour un nouveau roman. Yet critical exegeses do not follow up on the aspects of this technique, other than to mention it in a general fashion. For example, the second chapter of John Fletcher's Alain Robbe-Grillet (1983) opens with the promising words, "In some ways Robbe-Grillet has more in common with painters than he has with novelists . . ." Unfortunately this is followed only by a brief reference to the similarity between Robbe-Grillet's fictional world and that of the surrealist painters, before Fletcher turns immediately to what are apparently more pertinent topics.[10] Elly Jaffé-Freem's Alain Robbe-Grillet et la peinture cubiste published in 1966 is the only book solely on the topic of the relationship between Robbe-Grillet's novels and painting.[11] It approaches the problem without dealing first with the difficulty of the relationship between the verbal and the visual, assuming that analogies may be made between representation in both art forms, without accounting for different media, although

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[9] Roland Barthes, "Littérature littérale," Essais critiques, p. 66.

[10] John Fletcher, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Contemporary Writers (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 23.

[11] Elly Jaffé-Freem, Alain Robbe-Grillet et la peinture cubiste (Amsterdam: J.M. Meulenhoff, 1966).

Robbe-Grillet's own statements about the visual form of fiction provide at least a partial solution to this difficulty. Thus it would seem to be an urgent task to delineate exactly what Robbe-Grillet has to say about visual technique, in order to help create a bridge between the two media, before further exploring the relationships between his fiction and specific paintings, or certain types of painting.

As a film-maker with at least nine films to his credit, Robbe-Grillet is of course aware of this particular visual mode, but he himself is always careful to distinguish between the form of film and the form of literature, going so far as to say that it is impossible for him to transform his novels into films:

> . . . je me rends compte, de plus en plus, qu'écrire des romans et faire des films ce n'est pas du tout la même chose . . . . Il y a d'abord la solitude. Le roman se fait seul avec soi-même; c'est-à-dire qu'il y a à chaque instant des luttes, des tensions, mais elles ne sont en somme qu'entre moi et moi; les luttes avec le langage sont des luttes qu'on peut qualifier d'intérieures. Le cinéma, c'est cette lutte continuelle avec un matériau extérieur qui résiste . . . . Le cinéma a besoin d'incarner toute invention dans une réalité.[12]

Despite the fact that Robbe-Grillet, on the one hand, strongly differentiates between film and fiction, he does, on the other, acknowledge a certain rapprochement between his novels, surrealist art, and American pop art, usually in recorded interviews. His novels written from 1949 up to and including 1970, that is from Un Régicide to Projet pour une révolution à New York, while employing certain visual techniques, and the iconography and systems of certain forms of painting, unlike the works produced after 1970 are not illustrated by other artists. Robbe-Grillet's own statements about his interest in surrealist art, the significance of pop art, and his acknowledgement that he was familiar with a group of Giorgio de Chirico's metaphysical paintings, provides a logical and firm basis on which to expand an analysis of his visual technique in fiction to a discussion of the relationship between his novels and painting, especially in view of the self-conscious nature of his approach to fiction and the great lucidity with which he expounds his ideas.

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[12] Alain Robbe-Grillet "Le Cinéma selon Robbe-Grillet," Alain Robbe-Grillet, André Gardies, Cinéma d'aujourd'hui, No. 70 (Paris: Éditions Seghers, 1972), p. 105.

The works by Robbe-Grillet published since 1970 very systematically exploit visual images, combining his texts with paintings by René Magritte, etchings by Paul Delvaux, lithographs by Robert Rauschenberg, and photographs by David Hamilton and Irena Ionesco. The various types of collaboration involved in these works are just one aspect of their visual significance which demands exploration: for La Belle Captive (1975) Robbe-Grillet chose certain paintings by Magritte to be included in the book, Delvaux illustrated the text of Construction d'un temple en ruines à la Déesse Vanadé (1975), and Traces suspectes en surface (1979) was a completely collaborative production with Rauschenberg (Rauschenberg's lithographic imagery is a reaction to translations of Robbe-Grillet's handwritten manuscript, the author's response to these images being the creation of a new chapter). Robbe-Grillet has also published separate novels that do not embrace the visual aspect of the books mentioned, but which incorporate part or all of the above texts. For example, Topologie d'une cité fantôme (1975) includes texts from Traces suspectes en surface, Construction, and La Belle Captive, as well as from Rêves de jeunes filles (1971) and Les Desmoiselles d'Hamilton (1972), both first published with photographs by David Hamilton. Souvenirs du triangle d'or (1978) contains sections from La Belle Captive, La Cible (1978, preface to a Jasper Johns' catalogue) and also from Temples aux miroirs (1977, photographs by Irena Ionesco), as well as substantial portions of new text by Robbe-Grillet. The implications of assembling the texts in these different ways enlarges the scope and importance of the relationship of the visual image to a text, through direct interaction, rather than through the manipulation of the verbal to include a visual technique.

Many of the later verbal/visual works are difficult to obtain or published only in limited, very expensive editions: for example Traces suspectes en surface costs approximately $8,000. This may explain why certain literary critics condemn Robbe-Grillet as a writer who is dépassé, John Fletcher observing that, although Robbe-Grillet is the best-known and most articulate new novelist in Britain and the United States, there are:

> . . . unmistakable signs that the particular post-modernism that Robbe-Grillet so typically and centrally represents is dead . . . . He is no longer a revitalizing force in contemporary French literature--if anything a deadening one . . . . It is easy . . . to see him as a spent force in an exhausted literary milieu.[13]

If one considers the source of this pronouncement, a book published in England, written by an English professor of Comparative Literature, that alone is enough reason to view the statement sceptically. With very few exceptions, Robbe-Grillet has been ignored by the British literary and critical establishment, and what little attention has been paid to his novels is singularly lacking in percipience, two major exceptions being the sections devoted to Robbe-Grillet in John Sturrock's The French New Novel and Stephen Heath's The Nouveau Roman: A Study in the Practice of Writing.[14] Robbe-Grillet's reputation in the United States, however, remains high, due in part to the availability of Richard Howard's excellent English translations of his novels up to and including Projet pour une révolution à New York, and also to the willingness of critics such as Bruce Morrissette and Ben Stoltzfus to accept and explore his original approach to fiction in books such as The Novels of Robbe-Grillet and Alain Robbe-Grillet and the New French

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[13] John Fletcher, Alain Robbe-Grillet, pp. 83, 86.

[14] John Sturrock, The French New Novel: Claude Simon, Michel Butor, Alain Robbe-Grillet (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Stephen Heath, The Nouveau Roman: A Study in the Practice of Writing, Novelists and their World (London: Elek Books, 1972).

Novel.[15]

While John Fletcher's study lists in its bibliography of Robbe-Grillet's works such books as La Belle Captive, Construction d'un temple en ruines à la Déesse Vanadé, and Traces suspectes en surface, it is evident from his text that he has never actually seen them. On the basis of the fact that he is oblivious to the verbal/visual reality of these important works, it is difficult to accept his judgement that, as an author, Robbe-Grillet is "a spent force." Perhaps because Robbe-Grillet finds his sources and influences in the world of New York art--Lichtenstein, Rauschenberg, Johns--on this side of the Atlantic some preliminary study has been made of the verbal/visual volumes. Bruce Morrissette's Intertextual Assemblage in Robbe-Grillet from Topology to the Golden Triangle is an excellent source for further work on the subject of these books, while David Leach's edition of essays on Generative Literature and Generative Art demonstrates that certain American literary and art critics have at least seen Traces suspectes en surface.[16] But in light of the type of attack levelled at Robbe-Grillet by John Fletcher a reminder of the existence of this corpus, and its great originality of approach, is obviously in order.

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[15] Bruce Morrissette, The Novels of Robbe-Grillet (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975); Ben F. Stoltzfus, Alain Robbe-Grillet and the New French Novel (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964).

[16] Bruce Morrissette, Intertextual Assemblage in Robbe-Grillet from Topology to the Golden Triangle (Fredericton: York Press 1979); David Leach, ed., Generative Literature and Generative Art: New Essays (Fredericton: York Press, 1983).

The interaction between verbal and visual forms, which is so important to Robbe-Grillet's works since 1970, brings sharply into focus the consequences of his development of a visual technique in his early essays and novels, and of the influence of painting on his iconography and sensibilité in the fiction. The task of analysing and delineating the various aspects of his early use of the visual is a preliminary step towards understanding the later works, which has not yet been accomplished. An essential undertaking in its own right, in addition, it could illuminate hitherto unacknowledged elements of Robbe-Grillet's nouveau roman and the pragmatic forces at work in the creation of the novel of the future.

The critical methodology to be utilized in such a discussion is not readily available. This may come as a surprise in view of the long history of the study of the relationship between literature and the visual arts. In the publication Interrelations of Literature Ulrich Weisstein, in his chapter on "Literature and the Visual Arts," summarizes the difficulties inherent to the task:

> The mutual illumination of the arts in general, and the study of literature in its relation to the plastic arts in particular, is a discipline in its fledgling years that has not found its proper bearings and lacks a sound methodological foundation and a solid terminological framework. Its long but not always distinguished prehistory includes more or less systematic attempts to show either similarities or differences, to demonstrate the superiority of one art over the other, to polemicize against the fusion or separation of the arts, or to reduce all arts to one and the same--usually

mimetic--principle . . . .[17]

The nature of the problem created by an attempt to examine the specific relationship between a group of novels by a particular writer, and certain paintings, or movements in the visual arts, remains one of the unsolved, overall methodological dilemmas.

The history of the relationships between literature and the visual arts is an ancient and complex one. The ideas of imitation, put forth in Plato's concept of mimesis in The Republic, in Aristotle's notion of the mimetic in the Poetics, and in Horace's statement "ut pictura poesis" in the so called Ars Poetica, of importance in themselves, are likewise significant in their influence on later discussions about art and literature, where they are expanded upon or changed radically. They were of considerable consequence in the paragone or argument between the Renaissance poets and artists, in which each asserts the superiority of their respective art form. The artists predominated, establishing visual literalism and pictorialism in literature, at the same time that they severely circumscribed developments in literary form. By way of reaction to this state of affairs certain eighteenth century critics adopted a stance which denied that any association between the two arts was acceptable, the most notable of which is Lessing's Laocoön. The suggestion has been made that Lessing's distinction between poetry and painting need not be seriously considered because he knew little about the plastic arts.[18] But his book is of great historical importance nonetheless. His differentiation between the arts is based on formal dimensions: poetry is an intellectual art portraying human action, but it does not utilize space, colour, or simultaneity of effect, and painting is a visual, spatial art, without psychological or temporal dimensions. Because the significance of form enters so insistently into this concept, it continues to be of importance to discussions and polemics about the relationship between the two arts. Historically debate had centred on content, but Lessing opened the field to encounters involving form and structure.

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[17] Ulrich Weisstein, "Literature and the Visual Arts," Interrelations of Literature, ed. J-P. Barricelli and Joseph Gibaldi (New York: Modern Languages Association, 1982), p. 257.

Within the discipline of comparative literature the discussion of relationships between the arts has resulted in either a positive or negative stance towards the viability of such studies. Lessing's formal distinctions are a subtext to René Wellek's and Austin Warren's statement in the Theory of Literature about the separate nature of the arts in periodic evolution:

> The various arts--the plastic arts, literature, and music--have each their individual evolution, with a different tempo and a different internal structure of elements. No doubt they are in constant relationship with each other, but these relationships are not influences which start from one point and determine the evolution of the other arts; they have to be conceived rather as a complex scheme of dialectical relationships which work both ways, from one art to another and vice versa, and

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[18] E.H. Gombrich, "Lessing: Lecture on a Master Mind," Proceedings of the British Academy, 1957 (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 133-56.

> may be completely transformed within the art which they have entered. It is not a simple affair of a 'time spirit' determining and permeating each and every art. We must conceive of the sum total of man's cultural activities as of a whole system of self-evolving series, each having its own set of norms which are not necessarily indentical with those of the neighbouring series.[19]

Wellek and Warren seem more concerned in this passage with disputing the validity of the metaphysical concept of the "time spirit" or Zeitgeist as it is applied to literature, than with establishing theoretical directions for interart studies, but they do draw attention to the very real dangers inherent in basing such studies on periodization. In the book Comparative Literature and Literary Theory, Weisstein suggests, on a different note, that the idea of the purity of the arts is an illusion that persists in neoclassical and classicist art theory from Horace to Lessing, but which is really true only for certain periods:

> . . . for it is dialectically opposed to the Baroque-Romantic-Surrealistic conception . . . . which regards the fusion of the arts as a step toward a higher synthesis. Literary scholarship will have to deal with these mixed forms in which the arts have entered into some kind of symbiosis.[20]

A mutual illumination of the arts is altogether feasible Weisstein believes, if the approach is based on "rapports de fait," although he places the analysis of certain formal constructs beyond the domain of literary scholarship by relegating them to the area of comparative aesthetics: "those questions which pertain to the common structural bases of the arts, namely to such matters as the delimitation of space- and time-arts, surface- and depth-arts."[21]

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[19] René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, 3rd ed. (1942; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1956), pp. 134-35.

[20] Ulrich Weisstein, Comparative Literature and Literary Theory: Survey and Introduction, trans. William Riggan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), pp. 160-61.

Weisstein mentions two studies dealing with comparative aesthetics, Theodor Meyer Greene's The Arts and the Art of Criticism and Thomas Munro's The Arts and Their Interrelations, but both negate the structural bases of comparison named above. Greene says that the "basic difference between the temporal and the non-temporal arts is of great importance for artistic creation,"[22] although Munro is more hesitant to pronounce on the issue:

> Definite classification of the arts on this [spatial and temporal] basis is obviously difficult. One can generalize roughly to the effect that (a) certain arts often lay great emphasis on suggestive temporal development, especially literature (epic poetry and fiction), theatre arts, music, and picture sequences; (b) certain arts are intermediate in this respect, especially single still pictures and sculptures; (c) certain arts suggest little or no definite temporal development, especially architecture and the minor useful arts.[23]

Later suggestions by Weisstein about the study of the relationship between art and literature are particularly relevant to the topic and approach of this thesis. Firstly, he says that "One's choice of topic in undertakings of this kind ought to be gauged, precisely and narrowly, to the subject matter at hand."[24] Secondly, he declares that in such endeavours one should "proceed discretely and with measured pace from the small to the large and from the particular to the general."[25] This thesis proposes, in keeping with these two suggestions, to concentrate on specific novels by Alain Robbe-Grillet compared to certain types of painting, whose importance originates in the author's own expression of aesthetic interest and influence, and to begin with an examination of the visual technique and visual influences delineated by Robbe-Grillet in his essays and interviews and evident in his fiction. Only then will the thesis examine the broader aspects which relate his novels to de Chirico's metaphysical art, surrealist art, and American pop art. Furthermore, Weisstein asserts that "the student of interarts correspondences should, ideally, possess that scholarly know-how which entitles him to engage in a friendly professional rivalry with his peers on the other side of the curricular fence";[26] to that end, paintings and art movements will be referred to in the context of the authoritative art history and criticism in the field whenever a comparison or contrast with Robbe-Grillet's novels is suggested.

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[21] Ulrich Weisstein, Comparative Literature and Literary Theory, p. 158.

[22] Theodor Meyer Greene, The Arts and the Art of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 222.

[23] Thomas Munro, The Arts and Their Interrelations (Cleveland, Western Reserve University Press, 1967), p. 405.

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[24] Ulrich Weisstein, "Literature and the Visual Arts," p. 267.

[25] Ulrich Weisstein, "Literature and the Visual Arts," p. 267.

[26] Ulrich Weisstein, "Comparing Literature and Art: Current Trends and Prospects in Critical Theory and Methodology," Proceedings of the IXth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, Innsbruck 1979 (Innsbruck: Verlag des Instituts für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität, 1981), III, p. 24.

More specifically, the features of the works to be compared in this thesis provide a viable starting point. Robbe-Grillet is an author who has said that the sense of sight is our only reliable way of determining man's situation in the world, a premise developed in his novels that provides a first step in bridging the gap between literature and painting. The intellectual and aesthetic concepts to be examined, such as the idea of the void, the structures of memory, dream, and imagination, and the relevance of popular culture can first be analysed independently in each art form; they are not a forced basis of comparison. Secure in the knowledge that the comparison is valid, one may then proceed to make room for the "extreme flexibility of approach" which Jean Seznec believes is called for in a discussion of individual cases where one wishes "to describe the workings of the interchange between literature and the visual arts."[27] With a writer as versatile and far-seeing as Alain Robbe-Grillet no other approach will suffice.

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[27] Jean Seznec, "Art and Literature: A Plea for Humility," New Literary History, 3, No. 3 (Spring 1972), p. 572.

## II. ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET, VISUAL ASPECTS OF THE NOUVEAU ROMAN, AND MODERN PAINTING

A preliminary examination of the state of criticism on the relationship of Alain Robbe-Grillet's writing to modern art and to painting in particular reveals two types of approach: firstly, those critiques which compare his work to a specific type of painting and secondly, certain general statements about the visual and the technique of his novels, such as those by Roland Barthes, which introduce wider perspectives that could be particularly relevant to further study of the question. Elly Jaffé-Freem's *Alain Robbe-Grillet et la peinture cubiste* (1966), one of the two focused studies the title of which indicates a direct comparison between the writer and painting, surveys the innovations of the *nouveau roman* (treatment of character, plot, narration, and reality, and the function of the author and reader) in order to compare Robbe-Grillet's use of these techniques with the cubist's modification of the visual perception of the object.[1] Jaffé-Freem finds three general points of similarity between Robbe-Grillet's novelistic style and cubist painting: the notion of the object, the points of view from which it is regarded, and its treatment and presentation in word, line, form, and colour.[2] More specifically, resemblances may be found in the stress on the surface treatment of objects which avoids attempts to comprehend a hidden depth, resulting, in Robbe-Grillet's fiction,in a chronology which is a spreading out of the present through repeated descriptions and superimposed episodes, and a characterization lacking in moralization or commentary, leaving the persons and the events they are involved in to appear on an extrinsic level; in cubist painting, the outcome of this emphasis is a lack of perspective with a juxtaposition of simultaneous visions of the object and a visual impression in which form, line, and surface predominate. In both the literature and the painting, this approach produces a radical modification of technique, structure, and presentation.[3] As an example of the parallel developments, Jaffé-Freem points out the similarity between the presentation of the girls in Robbe-Grillet's novels, such as Le Voyeur, and the depiction of the woman in Picasso's Mademoiselle Léonie (1910); in both the text and the painting there is a constant repetition and modification of the elements of which the female is composed, but there is no penetration of the female psyche from the point of view of the writer or artist.[4] Perhaps the most important and original aspect of this book is the analysis of the object in Robbe-Grillet's fiction and in cubist painting as a common attempt to render simultaneously many aspects of one thing through mental fixation and the fixation of time, movement, and man as object, that results in the ambiguity essential both to the structure of Robbe-Grillet's novels and to cubist painting.

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[1] Elly Jaffé-Freem, *Alain Robbe-Grillet et la peinture cubiste* (Amsterdam: J.M. Meulenhoff, 1966).

[2] Jaffé-Freem, p. 23.

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[3] Jaffé-Freem, pp. 11-18.

[4] Jaffé-Freem, pp. 20-24.

The goal of Robert Sheldon Lemon's thesis, entitled "The Figurative Pretext: A Comparative Explication of the Fiction of Alain Robbe-Grillet and the Painting of the Photo Realists" (1976), is to establish a critical interpretation of Robbe-Grillet's novels which may be used as a means of analyzing the paintings by the photo realists Robert Bechtle, Robert Cottingham, Richard Estes, Chuck Close, Don Eddy, and Ralph Goings.[5] According to Lemon, this approach is feasible because of conceptual and stylistic similarities between the literature and art which include, among others, the use of banal subject matter, incomplete subject rendering, lack of characterization, detached viewpoint, parodistic and caricaturistic aesthetic gestures, the elucidation of the creative process, and the "noncommitment" of both author and artist. Both Robbe-Grillet and the Photo Realists ignore conventional mimetic expectations thereby introducing the element of surprise; the reader/viewer must then himself rearrange the elements of the work himself which in turn creates a relationship of process between the person and the work of art. In this manner the intrinsic dehumanization in the fiction and painting, which seems to be apparent in the nonanthropomorphic use of the object, is contradicted by the extension of the extrinsic reaction on the part of the reader/viewer which emphasizes structural or tectonic aspects.

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[5] Robert Sheldon Lemon Jr., "The Figurative Pretext: A Comparative Explication of the Fiction of Alain Robbe-Grillet and the Painting of the Photo Realists," Diss. Ohio University, 1976.

Concentrating on certain general presuppositions and relating them to concepts apparently literary in nature, such as narrative viewpoint, Lemon extends these terms to another art form without proper qualification, thereby creating confusion in his approach to a parallel study of two arts. The establishment of a critical interpretation of Robbe-Grillet's novels as a methodology employed in order to understand photo realist painting does not enlighten the reader about the importance of the visual in Robbe-Grillet's work itself and, on the other hand, it suggests in a misleading manner that Lemon is attempting to produce an examination on an equal basis of the relationship between two art forms, which is not the case as he establishes a priori the perimeters of Robbe-Grillet's writing. Jaffé-Freem's study, however, is more satisfying in its approach, for it is a genuine examination of the French author's novels from the perspective of cubist painting and its deployment of the object with enough concrete examples to make the argument enlightening if not all-encompassing, and it is also suggestive of a direction for further work in the area, which could perhaps include an even closer analysis of Robbe-Grillet's fiction in relation to the painting of Fernand Léger, Pablo Picasso, and Marcel Duchamp.

Robbe-Grillet's work of the 1970s, which frequently incorporates in one volume paintings by different artists along with the French author's text, has been the subject of specific, concrete analysis more frequently than the early work and these studies will be mentioned here in order to help obtain an overview not only of the work done on the relationship of Robbe-Grillet's work to the visual arts, but also with the goal of gaining an indication of his increasing interest in the integration of the visual with the literary text. Tony Towle's article[6] on the Robbe-Grillet/Robert Rauschenberg collaboration entitled Traces suspectes en surface (1978)[7] provides important factual background about the creation of this work and such details as would be necessary knowledge for a more complete study, including Rauschenberg's use of French magazines as the source of his images, the methods of lithography employed, and the particulars of the different roles of the writer and artist in the totality of the production.[8] Towle also comments on some similarities in style between Robbe-Grillet's writing and Rauschenberg's art, such as the substitution of oblique metaphor for plot or narrative in both, and the pervasive sense of mystery (the quality of things not seen, dreamed, or remembered).[9] Hal Foster's short article is a review of the same work while it was on display at Castelli Graphics in New York, that summarizes briefly Robbe-Grillet's text and also comments on certain similar strategies between the literature and the art work, such as the parallel acceptance of external codes of language and media which are correspondingly subverted by a disruption of narrative code and syntax.[10]

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[6] Tony Towle, "Rauschenberg: Two Collaborations: Robbe-Grillet and Voznesensky," The Print Collector's Newsletter, 10, No. 2 (May-June 1979), 37-41.

[7] Alain Robbe-Grillet and Robert Rauschenberg, Traces suspectes en surface (New York: Tatyana Grosman, Universal Limited Art Editions, 1979).

[8] Towle, 38.

More substantial specific discussion of Robbe-Grillet's text/image works of the 1970s, or "picto-romans" as he suggests they could be called,[11] may be found in two short but essential books on the topic which are useful in different ways. Bruce Morrissette's Intertextual Assemblage in Robbe-Grillet from Topology to the Golden Triangle (1979),[12] which The Year's Work in Modern Language Studies (1979)[13] suggests is an explication of Robbe-Grillet's later fiction "in the author's own terms," is important for the "Constructional Appendix" provided at the end which details the exact use of structural units of the conventional format novels Topologie d'une cité fantôme[14] and Souvenirs du triangle d'or[15] in the so-called picto-romans. Such a table is a necessary tool to reach any further understanding of Robbe-Grillet's literary-visual intertextuality. Generative Literature and Generative Art: New Essays edited by David Leach (1983) is a collection of essays which grew out of a colloquium in which Robbe-Grillet participated, the discussion giving equal emphasis to the literary and the visual in an exploration of generative techniques.[16] Bruce Morrissette's contribution is again helpful in its attempt to define two kinds of visual/verbal generative processes in Robbe-Grillet's novels of the 1970s; he divides them according to two notions, the idea of the influence of the visual upon the written and the understanding of the collaboration between writer and visual artist as a productive interchange.[17] Morrissette thus views two major critical problems apparent in the study of Robbe-Grillet's verbal/visual works, while other essays in the book provide useful discussions of generative aspects of postmodernism in literature and the visual arts.

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[9] Towle, 38.

[10] Hal Foster, "Review of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Robert Rauschenberg at Castelli Graphics,"Artforum, 18 (Sept. 1979), 73-74.

[11] Claude DuVerlie, "Beyond the Image: An Interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet," New Literary History, 2, No. 3 (Spring 1980), 534.

[12] Bruce Morrissette, Intertextual Assemblage in Robbe-Grillet from Topology to the Golden Triangle (Fredericton, N.B.: York Press, 1979).

[13] "Robbe-Grillet," The Year's Work in Modern Language Studies, 1979, p. 237.

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[14] Alain Robbe-Grillet, Topologie d'une cité fantôme (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1975).

[15] Alain Robbe-Grillet, Souvenirs du triangle d'or (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1978).

[16] David Leach, ed., Generative Literature and Generative Art: New Essays (Fredericton, N.B.: York Press, 1983).

[17] Bruce Morrissette, "Generative Techniques in Robbe-Grillet and Ricardou," Generative Literature, ed. David Leach (1983), pp. 25-34.

The nature of Robbe-Grillet's literary production of the 1970s and the discussion it has provoked indicates that his work moves progressively into a closer relationship with painting and other visual arts of the twentieth century, but the books and articles mentioned thus far provide only a starting point for the study of the visual aspects of Robbe-Grillet's oeuvre; they may be enlightening as to singular features of his novels, but they are by no means all-embracing or conclusive, a goal which in any case would be impossible to achieve in view of the contemporaneity and complexity of the texts in question. Certain general statements about visual aspects of Robbe-Grillet's writing do provide, however, a more solid basis for an analysis which remains true to the integrity of the text without ignoring the broader importance of the novels. More general comments on the significance of the visual in Robbe-Grillet's fiction exist as minor asides in such books as Marie Jaanus Kurrik's Literature and Negation (1979) which is primarily occupied with the concept of absence in modern literature; she says that the French author is not fundamentally concerned with images as visual concepts in themselves, but rather with the decomposition process of partial or incipient images as the revelation of verbal syntax through composing, cutting, slicing, repeating, and contradicting them.[18] His image of objects is, therefore, linguistically constructed. Another brief and typically enigmatic reference to Robbe-Grillet's juxtaposition of the verbal and the visual is found in Colin Westerbeck's article on his films:

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[18] Marie Jaanus Kurrik, Literature and Negation (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 235.

> In The Man Who Lies the relationship of pictorial to narrative elements, of the static to the moving picture, achieves a new richness. The concurrence of events in space influences and distorts their sequence in time the way the moon influences the ebbing of an ocean. Like a good deal of modern esthetics, The Man Who Lies suddenly renders uncertain basic distinctions we thought established long ago in Lessing's famous essay on Laocoön.[19]

Without a clear explanation as to his reasoning process, Westerbeck jumps from a discussion of one of Robbe-Grillet's later films (1968) to a commentary on Lessing, a critic whose seminal work (1766) involves an inquiry into the problem of time and space dimensions in the respective areas of the visual arts and literature.[20] Nonetheless, this aside highlights the interdisciplinary questions inevitably provoked by Robbe-Grillet's works.

While one may find many fleeting references to apparently visual features of Robbe-Grillet's writing in the massive amount of critical study devoted to the topic of his novels,[21] especially in discussion of specific works, four essays and one book provide particularly reliable and relevant broad commentary from which one may begin to extrapolate further ideas on the subject. Chronologically these include three essays by Roland Barthes published between 1954 and 1958 and collected in Essais critiques,[22] Olga Bernal's book Alain Robbe-Grillet: le roman de l'absence (1964),[23] and Ben Stoltzfus' article "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . . . Inescutcheon in Art and Robbe-Grillet" published in the Stanford French Review (1981).[24] Among Barthes' essays, the first one entitled "Littérature objective" (1954) contains the most extensive discussion of the visual in Robbe-Grillet's novels and, given that Barthes was working only with Les Gommes and an unpublished version of Le Voyeur, it is truly an amazing demonstration of prophetic and perceptive critical acumen. This commentary is important not only to the understanding of the novels in question but to a grasp of basic, important aspects of the totality of Robbe-Grillet's oeuvre as it stands in relation to the visual. In this essay, Barthes suggests the central thesis that Robbe-Grillet's deployment of the object in his writing results in things which appear to be "seulement une résistance optique"[25] due to the fact that they achieve a position in the fiction which is similar to the situation of the object proposed in Heidegger's philosophy; the object is in a state of "être là" rather than the state of "être quelque chose."[24] According to Barthes, Robbe-Grillet's motivation for using the optical sense is that it is the most effective agent for the destruction of the classical object or the classical perception of the object; to achieve this end he firstly isolates the object from its traditional and biological functions and secondly destroys the conventional usage of the adjective so that as a qualifier it is no longer analogical but rather spatial and situational. Barthes compares the analogical use of the adjective describing the classical object to the visceral sheen emanated by a Dutch still life painting, while he believes that Robbe-Grillet's descriptive adjective is similar to modern painting's depiction of the object when it abandons spatial representation in favour of simultaneous figurative planes. Just as the painted object appears through a proliferation of planes, Robbe-Grillet describes the objects with repeated minute changes thereby setting them in motion spatially, in direct opposition to the classical object which is frozen in a single space around which the spectator must move.

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[19] Colin L. Westerbeck, "Intrastructures: The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet," Artforum, 14 (March 1976), 57.

[20] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie," Gesammelte Werke (1766; rpt. München : Carl Hanser Verlag, 1959), II, 781-962.

[21] See in particular Dale Watson Fraizer, Alain Robbe-Grillet: An Annotated Bibliography of Critical Studies, 1953-1972 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1973).

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[22] Roland Barthes, Essais critiques, Points, 127 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964).

[23] Olga Bernal, Alain Robbe-Grillet: le roman de l'absence (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1964).

[24] Ben Stoltzfus, "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . . . Inescutcheon in Art and Robbe-Grillet," Stanford French Review, 5, No. 2 (Fall 1981), 229-245.

[25] Barthes, "Littérature objective," Essais critiques, p. 30.

One method by which Robbe-Grillet achieves this depiction of the object is through an obsessive use of detail, a technique which is important throughout his fiction, making it worthwhile to repeat here Barthes' description of the process:

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[24] Barthes, "Littérature objective," p. 31.

> Les multiples précisions de Robbe-Grillet, son obsession de la topographie, tout cet appareil démonstrateur a pour effet de détruire l'unité de l'objet en le situant exagérément, de façon que d'abord la substance soit noyée sous l'amas des lignes et des orientations et qu'ensuite l'abus des plans, pourtant dotés de dénominations classiques, finisse par faire éclater l'espace traditionnel pour y substituer un nouvel espace, muni comme on le verra à l'instant, d'une profondeur temporelle.[27]

The movement of the object into the new dimension of time results in a mutability that is different from the classical type, where the object's spatial essence exists in opposition to the functioning of time. In Robbe-Grillet's fiction mutability becomes an invisible process, according to Barthes, for the scarcely perceptible difference apparent each time the object reappears in the text is of a spatial, situational order which allows time to dislocate the spatial construction of the object; Robbe-Grillet pursues a dislocation of the object instead of engaging in the procedure of corruption and annihilation which is integral to the space and time relationships of the classical objects. Barthes concludes his analysis of Robbe-Grillet's use of the object not only by suggesting the visual method found in the literature in question, but also by indicating analogous approaches in the visual arts themselves:

> . . . la méthode de Robbe-Grillet . . . vise à une mise en question exhaustive de l'objet, d'où est exclue toute dérivation lyrique. Pour retrouver une telle plénitude de traitement, il faut aller dans la peinture moderne, y observer le tourment d'une

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[27] Barthes, "Littérature objective," p. 35.

> destruction rationnelle de l'objet classique. L'importance de Robbe-Grillet, c'est qu'il s'est attaqué au dernier bastion de l'art écrit traditionnel: l'organisation de l'espace littéraire. Sa tentative vaut en importance celle du surréalisme devant la rationalité, ou du théâtre d'avant-garde (Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov) devant le mouvement scénique bourgeois.[28]

Barthes' commentary thus places Robbe-Grillet's "visual" approach to the object in fiction at the forefront of a new and radically different literary trend, an observation which has proved to be incisive if one considers the essential role Robbe-Grillet's work has since played in the development of postmodernism in the novel.[29]

The title of Barthes' second essay on Robbe-Grillet "Littérature littérale" (1955) is not, as it might appear, an indication of a major change in his notions about Robbe-Grillet'a fiction, but instead is exemplary of a development in Barthes' ideas which is consistent with the evolution apparent in the novels of the nouveau romancier. Barthes links the radical style of Robbe-Grillet's narrative to "la nature proprement optique du matériel romanesque"[30] where the objective universe is described in such a way that it becomes "un espace implacable que l'homme ne peut fréquenter que par la marche, jamais pour l'usage où la sujétion."[31] In Le Voyeur, Barthes explains, the objects depicted are not sustained, as in Les Gommes, by certain conventional elements of a murder mystery; instead the objects themselves delineate Mathias' apparent crime, placing them in a dynamic and "literal" role and apart from the conventionally expected psychoanalytic order. The murder plot then develops on the rhetorical basis provided by the description of the objects; ". . . le projet de Robbe-Grillet est toujours que l'univers romanesque tienne enfin par ses seuls objets,"[32] that is, through objects that are demonstrably visual and spatial in construction. In the study "Il n'y a pas d'école Robbe-Grillet" (1958), Barthes again suggests that the French author's rejection of story, anecdote, and psychology in his novels, which is concurrent with a rejection of the significance of the object, results in the importance of optical description, an idea he enlarges upon apparently in particular reference to La Jalousie:

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[28] Barthes, "Littérature objective," pp. 38-39.

[29] For a discussion of Robbe-Grillet's contribution to contemporary trends in the novel see John Sturrock, "Introduction," The French New Novel: Claude Simon, Michel Butor, Alain Robbe-Grillet (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 1-41.

[30] Barthes, "Littérature littérale,"Essais critiques, p. 63.

> D'où l'importance de la description optique chez cet écrivain: si Robbe-Grillet décrit quasi-géométriquement les objets, c'est pour les dégager de la signification humaine, les corriger de la métaphore et de l'anthropomorphisme. La minutie du regard chez Robbe-Grillet (il s'agit d'ailleurs bien plus d'un dérèglement que d'une minutie) est donc purement négative, elle n'institue rien, ou plutôt elle institue précisément le rien humain de l'objet, elle est comme le nuage glacé qui cache le néant, et par conséquent le désigne. Le regard est essentiellement chez Robbe-Grillet une conduite purificatrice, la rupture d'une solidarité, fût-elle douloureuse, entre l'homme et les objets. Donc, ce

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[31] Barthes, "Littérature littérale," p. 63.

[32] Barthes, "Littérature littérale,"p. 69.

> regard ne peut en rien donner à réfléchir: il ne peut rien récupérer de l'homme, de sa solitude, de sa métaphysique.[33]

Visual strategy appears here to be a matter of negation; it does not represent the addition of another humanistic quality to the object, but rather it functions as a sign that objects and men do not stand in any relationship to each other. Barthes contrasts this perspective with Michel Butor's use of the object in La Modification as essential and analogical;[34] Robbe-Grillet's objects are literal by comparison because they exist alone without any reference to man whatsoever.

This insistence on the separation between man and object and the primacy of the object in Barthes' essays on Robbe-Grillet's fiction has had two effects: firstly, as a result of the wide dissemination of Barthes' ideas Robbe-Grillet has been censored for writing novels totally devoid of humanistic matter;[35] and secondly, Barthes has been accused of a formalist criticism which completely ignores the manifest content of the books.[36] Barthes' reaction to the two critiques is expressed in his "Préface" to Bruce Morrisette's Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet (1963) where he modifies his notions through a discussion of the evolution in Robbe-Grillet's writing from a concern with the être là of objects to a return to the social context of meaning as demonstrated by Morrisette's book.[37] In attempting a reconciliation of his notion of Robbe-Grillet's visual depiction of the object with these two approaches, the choisiste stance and the idea of Robbe-Grillet as a purely subjective writer, Barthes inadvertently falls into a trap. He accepts the opinion of the choisiste critics that these writings have dealt with a purely objective fiction and thereby acknowledges a simple dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity in his approach to Robbe-Grillet's novels which is by no means itself apparent in his essays. Their greater subtlety lies in part in the suggestion that the material of the novels is "proprement optique" in nature; the visual construction must then be dependent on the existence of man as well as object within perceptible distance of each other, although to approach the argument from this angle again alters Barthes' conclusions about the solitude of the object, only this time with a retention of his analysis of the visual. An alteration in the approach to the relationship between man and object in Robbe-Grillet's fiction is necessary because of one illogical step in the reasoning demonstrated by Barthes in his first essay, "Littérature objective":

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[33] Barthes, "Il n'y a pas d'école Robbe-Grillet," Essais critiques, pp. 101-02.

[34] Michel Butor, La Modification (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1957).

[35] Pierre de Boisdeffre, La Cafetière est sur la table ou contre le "nouveau roman" (Paris: La Table Ronde de Combat, 1967); Gilles Plazy, "Boisdeffre contre Robbe-Grillet ou une histoire de cafetière," Combat, 10, No. 7254 (9 Nov. 1967); Jean Bloch-Michel, Le Présent de l'indicatif: essai sur le nouveau roman (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1963); Jacques Borel, "Sur la déhumanisation de la littérature," Nouvelle Revue Française, 15 (1967), 397-419.

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[36] See Michel Rybalka's comment on this in "Alain Robbe-Grillet: A Bibliography," West Coast Review 2, No. 3 (Fall 1968), 31.

[37] Bruce Morrisette, Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet, Collection "Arguments" (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1974).

> "La condition de l'homme, c'est d'être là." Robbe-Grillet rappelait ce mot de Heidegger à propos de En attendant Godot. Eh bien, les objets de Robbe-Grillet, eux aussi, sont faits pour être là. Tout l'art de l'auteur, c'est de donner à l'objet un "être-là" et de lui ôter un "être quelque chose."[38]

Barthes attributes to the object what Heidegger and Robbe-Grillet attribute to man. Heidegger's central philosophical work Sein und Zeit (1927)[39] proposes the concept of Dasein or man as Being-in-the-world; William Barrett explains:

> [Man] is in the world because, existing, he is involved in it totally. Existence itself, according to Heidegger, means to stand outside oneself, to be beyond oneself. My Being is not something that takes place inside my skin . . . . my Being, rather, is spread over a field or region which is the world of its care and concern.[40]

This idea of man's field of being destroys the notion of Cartesian dualism which divides subject and object, so that the object becomes an integral part of human awareness or man's Being-in-the-world. Heidegger says in Sein und Zeit:

> Sollen wir uns demnach zuvor an das Seiende halten, bei dem sich das Dasein zunächst und zumeist

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[38] Barthes, "Littérature objective," p. 31.

[39] Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, 7th ed. (1927; rpt. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1977).

[40] William Barrett, Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy, Anchor Books (New York: Doubleday, 1962), p. 217.

> aufhält, an die "wertbehafteten" Dinge? Zeigen nicht sie "eigenlich" die Welt, in der wir leben? Vielleicht zeigen sie in der Tat so etwas wie "Welt" eindringlicher. Diese Dinge sind aber doch auch Seiendes "innerhalb" der Welt.[41]

Barthes' theory of the independence of objects from man's existence in the world of Robbe-Grillet's fiction is not true if presented in the terms of Heidegger's philosophy; they must be observed from another perspective if one is to take into account the influence of Heidegger's thought on Robbe-Grillet's writing. Such an approach may retain, nevertheless, Barthes' concept of the visual in the novels because this idea involves the inseparability of man and object within man's Dasein.

In her study of Robbe-Grillet's novels, Alain Robbe-Grillet: le roman de l'absence, Olga Bernal also makes considerable reference to notions of phenomenological and existential thought; Barthes' analysis of Robbe-Grillet's object thus finds a certain amelioration in Bernal's contention that:

> La littérature des phénomènes, comme la peinture moderne, c'est le constat que l'homme n'est pas une profondeur riche et insondable, mais un creux, un vide temporel.[42]

It is her understanding that man is not, therefore, in a solitary situation in Robbe-Grillet's fiction, but in the midst of an environment created by objects which appropriate what might have been man's emotions and ideas as concrete things and images, a position parallel to that of the object in modern painting. She notes that certain developments in the novel have occurred much later than particular innovations in the painting of this century; long before Robbe-Grillet engaged in the nettoyage of the novel Cezanne declared "je pars neutre."[43] Before the advances achieved by the French author's novels, it was possible for Sartre to distinguish between the two arts according to the symbolism in literature and the "silent" depiction of images without symbolism in painting, but for Bernal "pareille distinction n'est plus possible après l'événement du roman de Robbe-Grillet" as the novel is no longer engagé, no longer playing the role of a social conscience.[44]

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[41] Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, pp. 63-64.

[42] Bernal, p. 19.

Bernal's opinion is that in painting, the interest in form, at the expense of humanistic content, began with Cezanne, in the novel with Robbe-Grillet; she believes Robbe-Grillet wants to build the constructs of the nouveau roman on the ruins of the old novel form just as Georges Braque wanted to begin his work with "la négation de la peinture."[45] Braque's desire to "rejoindre un certain néant intellectuel" is maintained with the goal in mind of a finished work in which the idea has disappeared.[46] For Bernal:

> La part du vide . . . est grande dans toutes ces

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[43] Bernal, p. 21.

[44] Bernal, p. 21.

[45] Bernal, p. 24.

[46] Cited by G. Charbonnier, Le Monologue du peintre (Paris: Julliard, 1959), p. 11, as quoted by Bernal, p. 24.

> recherches et "le degré zéro de l'écriture" selon l'expression de Roland Barthes, qui hante le roman de Robbe-Grillet, n'est autre que ce commencement des choses que poursuit la peinture.[47]

An example of this emptiness or, to use Robbe-Grillet's phrase "le creux au coeur de la réalité," is found in Giacometti's approach to the depiction of the human figure.[48] Bernal quotes him:

> Je commençais donc bel et bien par faire une figure analysée, avec des jambes, une tête, des bras, et tout cela me semblait faux, je n'y croyais pas. Pour le préciser, j'ai été obligé peu à peu de sacrifier, de réduire . . . de laisser tomber la tête, les bras et tout! De la figure, il ne me restait qu'une plaque . . . .[49]

This same process of dissolution is apparent in the treatment of character in Robbe-Grillet's novels, Bernal says; in both the painting and the literature there is a total effacement of intimately known forms--natural or imaginary.[50] Bernal compares Giacommetti's description of his "plaque" to a depiction of facial features in Le Voyeur which appear "comme fixés à l'improviste sur une plaque photographique"[51] thereby refusing the referential familiarity the character Mathias tries to impose upon them. Robbe-Grillet's descriptive technique and Giacommetti's treatment of the figure both attempt to suppress forms as accustomed signs and to release previously unknown forms or "des formes au milieu desquelles on n'est plus chez soi."[52]

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[47] Ibid., p. 24.

[48] André S. Labarthe and Jacques Rivette, "Entretien avec Resnais et Robbe-Grillet," Cahiers du Cinéma, 21, No. 125 (Sept. 1961), 18; cited in Bernal, p. 101.

[49] Cited by S. Charbonnier, p. 162, as quoted by Bernal, p. 27.

[50] Bernal, p. 27.

[51] Bernal, p. 27.

As does Barthes, Bernal also draws attention to Robbe-Grillet's refusal of the adjectival object as a denial of interiority thereby producing another parallel with modern painting that, by censuring the use of illusionist perspective and familiar iconography, intends the spectator to grasp only the exterior of the object.[53] Although she deals with the relationship of literature and painting almost uniquely in the "Introduction" to her book, the main focus of the work being the phenomenological and existential status of the object in the construction of the novels themselves, Bernal's general conclusion has some resemblance to that of Barthes: that Robbe-Grillet's treatment of the object is similar to and can most fruitfully be compared with the use of the object in modern painting. Nonetheless, her stress on Robbe-Grillet's idea of "le creux au coeur de la réalité" helps to highlight an existential position of the object which is more ambiguous and many-faceted than that implied by the division in critical approach over the purely subjective or purely objective novel. She carries Barthes' notion of the Heideggerian être là as referring to the surface of Robbe-Grillet's objects one logical step further by pointing out that on a formal level his use of objects in the novels as surrounding the creux in reality exemplifies the outcome of the general modern experience of néant or nothingness. Therefore, not only objects but also men partake of this emptiness, this negation of profundity in emotion and idea, from which he reaches substance purely through the creating consciousness, a notion which broadens the scope of the phenomenological area in question in Robbe-Grillet's fiction itself, and in the comparative features which relate his fiction to modern painting, to both man and object.

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[52] Bernal, p. 28.

[53] Bernal, p. 34.

In contrast to Bernal's discussion produced in the context of a book length study, Ben Stoltzfus' contribution to the work on the relationship of the visual arts to Robbe-Grillet's novels is found in an article entitled "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . . . Inescutcheon in Art and Robbe-Grillet" that outlines general comparisons between his fiction and modern art before going on to draw more specific parallels with the techniques of cubism. Stoltzfus suggests that the desacralization of art, which began with Manet's Olympia (1865) and Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe (1863), is comparable to the current demythification taking place in the literature of the nouveau roman; Kandinsky, Mondrian, and Pollock eliminated anecdote in art as the nouveaux romanciers were to do later in literature, while Cezanne, Van Gogh, and Picasso threw suspicion on the notion of art as a mirror of reality, drawing attention to the painterly nature of art, just as the nouveaux romanciers self-consciously emphasize the nature of creation in the literary text. What Stoltzfus calls the "mirror play" of cubism--the discontinuity, the fragmentation, and the multiple points of view--desacralize nature, art, and reality but these techniques, which are common to the _nouveau roman_ as well, and especially to _La Maison de rendezvous_, also emphasize the creative act in a break with convention. This rupture was perhaps more easily accomplished by the painters than by the writers for the painters had to react to the single factor of tradition in painting while the writers had to cope with the mediating factor of language as well as with the literary tradition.

After the establishment of these factors as a basis for the discussion of the relationship between modern art and the _nouveau roman_, Stoltzfus points out that mirror play frequently undermines reality in Robbe-Grillet's novels and indicates that this procedure has two analogies in art: the techniques of cubism and inescutcheon (he equates this with the literary critical term of _mise en abyme_). He indicates how the reflecting surfaces of cubism completely destroy mimesis, while the tendency towards abstraction which began with Cézanne, results in an elimination of perspective, representation, and anecdote which can be compared with the _nouveau roman's_ desacralization of character, devaluation of plot, and exclusion of linear chronology. However, in the _nouveau roman_ there is a double use of mirroring (as in the famous example of Velasquez's painting _Las Meninas_ [1656]);

the text/painting mirrors not only the intentions of the author/artist but also reflects itself. In Robbe-Grillet's novels the historical role of mirrors in literature as creators of mystery is replaced by the function of inescutcheon indicating a literary "consciousness--an absolute and imperious desire to see and know."[54] The mirroring thus produces a dialectic between the subjective vision of the writer and the outer, objective world, mediated by the nature of the text itself:

> Mirrors are designed to reflect reality. Inescutcheon, however, which is a reflection of a reflection (Cubism is inescutcheon to the Nth power) dissolves reality, substituting for it a man-made object which reflects not nature, but consciousness. Since consciousness is normally not visible, an art form that can materialize it is indeed magical.[55]

According to Stoltzfus, then, inescutcheon in art and literature provides a means whereby man's consciousness of the world can be made concrete, Robbe-Grillet's novels being exemplary of this process.

Stoltzfus' argument about inescutcheon in Robbe-Grillet's novels and in painting has a major link with Bernal's ideas--the notion that depiction and description of the object is dependent on man's consciousness, or the means by which twentieth century man perceives himself in the world. Barthes' essay "Littérature objective" draws attention to Robbe-Grillet's interest in Heidegger's philosophy, an influence which is also apparent in one of his statements about the film L'Année dernière à Marienbad (1961) for which he wrote the scenario and dialogue. The focus of this film is a missing time or space involving what may have been the common past of the two central characters:

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[54] Stoltzfus, "Mirror, Mirror," p. 243.

[55] Stoltzfus, p. 237.

> . . .Dans Marienbad, le phénomène important est toujours comme à l'état de creux au coeur de cette réalité. Ce qui, dans Marienbad, est en creux, c'est "l'année dernière." Ce qui s'est passé--s'il s'est passé quelque chose autrefois--produit constamment une sorte de manque dans le récit. Comme le personnage principal de La Jalousie n'est qu'un creux, comme l'acte principal, le meurtre, est en creux dans Le Voyeur. Tout est raconté avant le trou, puis de nouveau après le trou, et on essaie de rapprocher les deux bords pour faire disparaître ce vide gênant. Mais c'est tout le contraire qui se produit: c'est le vide qui envahit, qui remplit tout.[56]

As Olga Bernal shows in her study, this Heideggerian theme of the emptiness at the centre of reality is important to Robbe-Grillet's work:

> C'est dans la lignée de l'expérience du vide sans accommodement aucun qu'il faut situer le roman de Robbe-Grillet. En cela, il est plus proche de Heidegger que de Sartre . . . . Pour Sartre, le néant n'est pas une catégorie indépendante de l'être . . . . Or, il n'en est nullement ainsi chez Heidegger qui lui reconnaît une existence indépendente de l'homme: "Le Néant est originairement antérieur au 'Non' et à la négation." Le néant de Heidegger est, pour ainsi dire, irrémédiable, il est et ne dépend pas d'un processus humain de négation et de refus.[57]

The notion of the void persists throughout the early fiction, she notes, from Les Gommes of 1953 to Dans le Labyrinthe of 1959, appearing almost unfailingly:

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[56] Labarthe and Rivette, "Entretien," 18.

[57] Bernal, p. 104; quotation from Martin Heidegger, Qu'est-ce que la metaphysique? (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1951), p. 27.

> Ce "vide géant" traduit dans le roman . . . par les termes "fissure," "faille," "fêlure" . . . Ils constituent de véritables constantes du roman de Robbe-Grillet.[58]

In the last section of the book, Bernal discusses the dissolution in the world of Robbe-Grillet's fiction, which illustrates the void, in part by showing the relativity of his realism, of the visual sense or "les modalités du regard," modalities which are divided into three parts: the regard as narrative point of view, the regard which creates its own reality, and the regard which is an act of nonengagement.[59] But although Robbe-Grillet's construction of his novels around the notion of the void is thus related to the dissolution of the fictional world through techniques involving the visual sense, the analysis is based in a large part on Merleau-Ponty's ideas of perception which emphasize that the object as perceived by the individual, no matter how distorted, is more significant than the material description or location of the object;[60] she explains, therefore, that through *le regard* man constitutes the objects of his vision around a central emptiness.

Since the publication of Bernal's book, Robbe-Grillet himself has commented on the "absence" in certain of his novels, for example in *Le Monde* in 1976:

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[58] Bernal, p. 105.

[59] Bernal, p. 165.

[60] John Torrance, "Phenomenology," *The Harper Dictionary of Modern Thought*, ed. Alan Bullock and Oliver Stallybrass (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

> Le projet . . . du *Voyeur*, des *Gommes* et de *la Jalousie* est centré sur un manque. Je ne sais quel critique avait dit à propos du *Voyeur* que j'avais certainement procédé en supprimant après coup la page essentielle du manuscrit. C'est completement imbécile. Le livre n'excite que parce que cet endroit manque. Il s'agit de quelqu'un qui écrit précisément pour essayer d'effacer cette heure pendant laquelle il s'est peut-être passé un crime sexuel.[41]

This statement indicates the importance of *le creux* within the structure of these early novels; in the extract from the following 1975 *débat*, it is apparent that the author directly relates this absence to the visual perspective of the narrator:

> . . . c'est le narrateur qui est tourné vers l'objet. Dans tous mes premiers récits, dans *Le Voyeur* et *La Jalousie* en particulier, il y a une espèce de creux central qui est quand même l'origine d'un regard, le regard de quelqu'un. Si mes préoccupations avaient été objectives, c'est-à-dire de neutralité, d'impartialité, comment est-ce que le mille-pattes écrasé de *La Jalousie* pourrait avoir tantôt deux centimètres, et tantôt dix ou vingt? C'est visiblement un objet qui prend une forme par le regard, qui est déformé, et plus généralement informé, par le fait qu'il y a un regard qui l'appréhende. En fin de compte, je pense que l'objet ne m'intéresse pas, contrairement à ce qui a été dit par les critiques du début. Je me rappelle une phrase de Sartre: Si je dis que la boîte de mon encrier est un parallélépipède, je n'ai rien dit sur cette boîte. Évidemment! Mais ça m'est égal de ne rien dire sur la boîte. Ce qui m'intéresse, si j'écris que la boîte est un parallélépipède, c'est que je dis quelque chose sur le regard qui a vu la boîte, et le monde dans lequel se meuvent les regards est un monde d'objets, et non un monde objectif. C'est même probablement le plus subjectif de tous les mondes.[42]

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[41] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Alain Robbe-Grillet: Chez moi, c'est la structure qui produit le sens," *Le Monde*, 16 Jan. 1976, p. 17.

[42] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Extrait d'un débat public avec Alain Robbe-Grillet: Université de Caen, 24 Avril 1975," *Le*

The important, central "creux" of the novel is a product of the visual point of view, not in relation to the objects perceived, but as linked with "le regard" that sees them. The "néant" mentioned by Bernal is thus intimately linked both with the core of the novel and with the subjective standpoint of the visual.

Bernal's connection of the form of Robbe-Grillet's novels with Heidegger's concept of néant as the basis of being, is reinforced by Robbe-Grillet's expressed interest in Heidegger's philosophy.[43] But the influence of this German philosopher on his fiction is more indebted to a certain sensibilité than to direct knowledge, Robbe-Grillet states:

> En revanche, j'ai connu assez tôt la notion de "Dasein" par l'intermédiaire de Sartre, mais de façon assez superficielle.
>
> D'une façon générale, c'est aprés avoir écrit de nombreux romans que j'ai retrouvé chez les philosophes (Husserl et Heidegger tout spécialement) la justification conceptuelle de ce qui était chez moi des intuitions sensibles.[44]

Robbe-Grillet's novels may perhaps be understood in terms of Heidegger's notion of sight as related to the authenticity

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[42] (cont'd) Parcours moebien de l'écriture: Le Voyeur de Alain Robbe-Grillet, Alain Goulet, Archives des lettres modernes, 202 (Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1982), p. 91.

[43] Martin Heidegger, "Die Beantwortung der Frage," Was ist Metaphysik?, 3rd ed. (1929; rpt. Frankfurt A.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1965), pp. 33-42. Robbe-Grillet discussed Heidegger in "Les Formes du roman contemporaine," University of Alberta, Edmonton, 3 Oct. 1983.

[44] Letter received from Alain Robbe-Grillet (ALS), 23 July 1984.

of Dasein.[65] In Sein und Zeit, Heidegger's central work, which is not referred to by Bernal, he characterizes Being-in-the-world as marked by three traits: mood or feeling, understanding, and speech, but it is the second of these traits, understanding, which is concerned with the idea of sight (Sicht). Heidegger says that:

> Das Verstehen macht . . . existenzial das aus, was wir die Sicht des Daseins nennen . . . . Die Sicht die sich primär und im ganzen auf die Existenz bezieht, nennen wir die Durchsichtigkeit. Wir wählen diesen Terminus zur Bezeichnung der wohlverstandenen "Selbsterkenntnis," um anzuzeigen, dass es sich bei ihr nicht um das wahrnehmende Aufspüren und Beschauen eines Selbstpunktes handelt, sondern um ein verstehendes Ergreifen der vollen Erschlossenheit des In-der-Welt-seins durch seine wesenhaften Verfassungsmomente hindurch. Existierendes Seiendes sichtet "sich" nur, sofern es sich gleichursprünglich in seinem Sein bei der Welt, im Mitsein mit Anderen als der konstitutiven Momente seiner Existenz durchsichtig geworden ist.[66]

In this passage Heidegger relates "sight," which is also point of view, to an integrated understanding and conceptualization of the world, an idea that expands beyond le regard simply as a means of arriving at man's perception of the object.

However, before further exploring Heidegger's concept of sight as understanding in order to relate it to the form of Robbe-Grillet's fiction, it is essential to examine the French writer's own statements about the visual. As yet there has been no systematic attempt to investigate these declarations, whether about the visual in the context of his ideas on literature and literary form, on the subject of the relationship between his novels and the work of individual painters or art movements in general, or on the topic of his writings which have been published in conjunction with paintings or photographs. The essays on the novel published in Pour un nouveau roman (1963),[47] which are of vital importance to the evolution of the genre of the nouveau roman, provide the central assertions about the visual as an aspect of literature and its form, although other, selected interviews with Robbe-Grillet are also pertinent to the discussion, while his statements about the actual relationships between his writing and painting are limited in number but with a significance for the close analysis of his texts which belies their sparseness. The final category of his declarations is of most importance in understanding the work Robbe-Grillet has published since 1970, but they also shed some light on the approach to the visual even in the earlier novels, particularly as Robbe-Grillet has acknowledged the tremendous influence of surrealism and surrealist painting on his work in general.[48] Thus the appearance in 1975 of two volumes published with works by surrealist painters, *Construction d'un temple en ruines à la Déesse Vanadé*[69] with etchings by Paul Delvaux, and *La Belle Captive*[70] with paintings by René Magritte, is helpful in elucidating his earlier work. The importance of the author's own statements cannot be overemphasized given the contemporary nature of the work in question and the resulting relative scarcity of critical analyses, the complexity of the visual mode of these novels, and Robbe-Grillet's own stress on the link between creation and consciousness. He says in the first essay of *Pour un nouveau roman*:

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[65] Richard Macksey says in "The Artist in the Labyrinth: Design or Dasein," "Life is for Roquentin, as for Heidegger and Robbe-Grillet, supremely a matter of Dasein," Modern Language Notes, 77 (1962), 254; Ben Stoltzfus examines the problem of the metaphysical void and the general existential dilemma expressed by Robbe-Grillet in "Dead, Desacralized, and Discontent: Robbe-Grillet's New Man," Modern Fiction Studies, 27, No. 4 (1981-82), 543-553.

[66] Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 146.

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[47] Alain Robbe-Grillet, Pour un nouveau roman (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1963).

[48] Personal interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet, 11 October 1983.

> Après les *Faux-Monnayeurs*, après Joyce, après *La Nausée*, il semble que l'on s'achemine de plus en plus vers une époque de la fiction où les problèmes de l'écriture seront envisagés lucidement par le romancier, et où les soucis critiques, loin de stériliser la création, pourront au contraire lui servir de moteur.[71]

After establishing the author's right to a self-conscious and critical approach to his writing, Robbe-Grillet outlines how this phenomenon functions:

> Loin de respecter des formes immuables, chaque nouveau livre tend à constituer ses lois de fonctionnement en même temps qu'à produire leur destruction. Une fois l'oeuvre achevée, la réflexion critique de l'écrivain lui servira encore à prendre

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[69] Alain Robbe-Grillet and Paul Delvaux, *Construction d'un temple en ruines à la Déesse Vanadé* (Paris: Éditions le Bateau-Lavoir, 1975).

[70] Alain Robbe-Grillet, *La Belle Captive* (Bruxelles: Société Nouvelle d'Éditions Internationales, 1975).

[71] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "A quoi servent les théories," *Pour un nouveau roman*, p. 11. All further references are to this edition of the essay and appear in the text.

> ses distances par rapport à elle, alimentant aussitôt de nouvelles recherches, un nouveau départ. (p. 11)

In his essays and in his published interviews, which are numerous, Robbe-Grillet appears actively committed to a process of self-reflection which allows the reader to more readily understand the evolution of his writing. While it is possible here to examine only a selection of his statements, concentrating on those relevant to the visual and to painting, the organization of the following discussion will attempt to provide a coherent outline of his attitude to the topic of art and literature, a necessary preliminary to a study of the relationship between the visual form in literature, aspects of modern painting, and those of Robbe-Grillet's novels published between 1953 and 1970.

The essays in Pour un nouveau roman at times draw upon examples in the visual arts and music to illustrate analogous points about the nature of the novel; for instance in "A quoi servent les théories" (1955 and 1963), he attacks the insistence which prevails in some French literary circles on using the outmoded form of Balzacian realism as the prototype to which the best modern novel must conform, noting, in order to highlight the conservatism of the literary attitude (pp. 9-10), that a contemporary musician would earn scant praise for the composition of a Beethoven or that a modern painter would receive few plaudits for producing a Delacroix. In "Sur quelques notions périmées"

(1957)[72] he argues against the idealist view of art and revolution struggling forward hand in hand; in the service of revolution a strike, or the denunciations of an oppressed person, actively count for much more than a novel or painting, but again he places the visual and the written in the same category (pp. 34-36). On formalism, in the same essay, he says, "il en va de même pour une symphonie, une peinture, un roman: c'est dans leur forme que réside leur réalité" (p. 41). "Nouveau roman, homme nouveau" (1961)[73] draws analogies in order to stress the great importance of change and evolution in art; "les formes vivent et meurent, dans tous les domaines de l'art, et de tout temps, il faut continuellement les renouveler" (p. 114). Commenting on art and ideology to Germaine Brée in an interview published in 1979, Robbe-Grillet says:

> I live in society, I am part of that society, I am myself inside its ideology, and not exterior to it. But I see a system for maintaining my freedom within this ideological prison. The system is born of the New Novel and of all modern art--of pop art in American painting, and of modern music, too. It consists of detaching fragments from society's discourse and using them as raw materials to construct something else.[74]

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[72] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Sur quelques notions périmées," Pour un nouveau roman, pp. 25-44. All further references are to this edition of the essay and appear in the text.

[73] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Nouveau roman, homme nouveau," Pour un nouveau roman, pp. 113-21. All further references are to this edition of the essay and appear in the text.

[74] Germaine Brée, "Alain Robbe-Grillet: What Interests me is Eroticism: An Interview," Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contents/Critical Texts, ed. George Stambolian and Elaine Marks (Ithaca: Cornell University

While specifying the importance of a certain movement in American painting to the system he utilizes--pop art--he nonetheless places the ideological function of literature and painting in the same category, expanding upon the idea expressed in "Sur quelques notions périmées" that literature and painting should not serve ideology but rather provide an area of freedom within the inevitable ideological constrictions of any activity in society.

As well as such direct analogies between literature and art, Robbe-Grillet also treats the aspect of the visual in the literary text throughout most of the essays in Pour un nouveau roman. The well known article "Une Voie pour le roman futur" (1956)[75] indicates how the visual is an essential element in the development and survival of the novel form. Robbe-Grillet believes that literature is appropriated by the culture which surrounds it, making the objectivity, which consists of freedom of observation, impossible to achieve in fiction; a visual factor or landscape is appropriated by the cultural environment of the literature, so that it becomes a metaphor for an interpretive emotional content leaving the reader unable to evoke the concrete elements which contribute to the construction of this content:

> Nous sommes habitués à que cette littérature (le mot est devenu péjoratif) fonctionne comme une grille,

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[74](cont'd) Press, 1979), p. 93.

[75] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Une Voie pour le roman futur," Pour un nouveau roman, pp. 15-23. All further references are to this edition of the essay and appear in the text.

> munie de verres diversement colorés, qui décompose notre champ de perception en petits carreaux assimilables. (p. 18)

Robbe-Grillet adds that if something resists "cette appropriation systématique" (p. 18) of the visual as metaphor, it is then disposed of conveniently by placing it in the category of the absurd. But between the polarities of interpretive significance and the absurd there exists another category; he says this world "est, tout simplement" (p. 18). Neither adjective nor absurdity applies here; instead they are replaced by a visual mode of apprehension, the mode for which Robbe-Grillet reserves his hope for the novel of the future. He suggests that with the visual approach the literary word no longer functions as a trap which can appropriate or be appropriated by the prevailing culture, leaving open the way for a change in language that is already occurring:

> Nous constatons, de jour en jour, la répugnance croissante des plus conscients devant le mot à caractère viscéral, analogique ou incantatoire. Cependant que l'adjectif optique, descriptif, celui qui se contente de mesurer, de situer, de limiter, de définir, montre probablement le chemin difficile d'un nouvel art romanesque. (p. 23)

Although a superficial reading of this passage would seem to indicate advocacy of a complete separation between the subjective and the objective, as the object is no longer analogical, the visual adjective which Robbe-Grillet refers to here really undermines the Cartesian world view. Descartes' definition of the dualism between the mind, conscious and infallible, and the body, occupier of space which can never be totally understood,[76] actually presupposes that the immateriality of the mind of man is understood in relation to external things, as William Barrett explains:

> Though man and nature are irremediably split off from each other, secretly what takes place is that the Being of man is always understood in analogy to physical substances. While modern thought has split off man from nature, it has tried nevertheless to understand man in terms of physical realities.[77]

Thus Robbe-Grillet's declaration about the visual does not suggest that the object depicted in fiction should be irreconcilable with subjectivity, only that it should be presented according to a different perception, no longer as a Cartesian physical reality which is the unacknowledged result of human subjectivity, but rather as a physical reality which is the disclosed subjectivity of the human mind, content "de mesurer, de situer, de limiter, de définir."

The closing statement of "Une Voie pour le roman futur" places the visual adjective, as a form of literary presentation, squarely at the forefront of contemporary developments in fiction, but the method through which it functions is explained more specifically in the essay "Nature, humanisme, tragédie" (1958) as a weapon against humanistic metaphor.[78] Utilizing the example of the description of a mountain as "majestueuse" (p. 48), Robbe-Grillet points out that such a metaphor, that is supposed to express a simple comparison, instead adds an anthropomorphic dimension to the reader's visualization of the mountain, situating him in an emotional relationship to its comparative dimension; "la hauteur de la montagne prend, qu'on le veuille ou non, une valeur morale" (p. 49). While it may seem easier for the reader to see the mountain when the word majestic is used, than by measuring the gaze from which its height is registered, this is a false rationale which succeeds in introducing the humanistic complicity of metaphor into what should be a simple description of an object. Having provided this analysis of the humanistic fallacy in metaphor, Robbe-Grillet suggests:

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[76] Anthony Quinton, "Dualism," The Harper Dictionary of Modern Thought, ed. Alan Bullock and Oliver Stallybrass (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 183.

[77] Barrett, p. 217.

[78] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Nature, humanisme, tragédie,"

> Mais voilà que l'oeil de cet homme se pose sur les choses avec une insistence sans mollesse: il les voit, mais il refuse de se les approprier, il refuse d'entretenir avec elles aucune entente louche, aucune connivence, il ne leur demande rien . . . . Il peut, d'aventure, en faire le support de ses passions, comme de son regard. Mais son regard se contente d'en prendre les mesures; et sa passion de même, se pose à leur surface . . . . (p. 48)

Objects depicted from such a perspective in a novel refuse humanistic complicity; the eye sees something, but the mind of the man does not commandeer it in the name of the Cartesian definition of reality. "Le regard apparaît aussitôt dans cette perspective comme le sens privilégié . . ." (p. 65), most readily establishing an authentic

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[1]"(cont'd) Pour un nouveau roman, pp. 45-67. All further references are to this edition of the essay and appear in the text.

relationship between subject and object. One final statement in "Nature, humanisme, tragédie" overtly reveals the value Robbe-Grillet places on a certain type of subjectivity in the novel that acts against tragic and humanistic identification:

> Le regard demeure malgré tout notre meilleure arme . . . . Quant à sa "subjectivité"--principal argument de l'opposition--, que retranche-t-elle à sa valeur? Bien évidemment il ne peut s'agir, de toute façon, que du monde tel que l'oriente _mon point de vue_; je n'en connaîtrai jamais d'autre. La subjectivité relative de mon regard me sert précisément à définir _ma situation dans le monde_. J'évite simplement de concourir, moi-même, à faire de cette situation une servitude. (p. 66)

The subjective nature of the sense of sight is of great significance, but Robbe-Grillet refers to it outside of the literary tradition of metaphorical description. One may differentiate here between the humanistic complicity with which he disagrees, and the independent subjectivity that he supports, using two terms: the former may be called visual description while the latter may be termed visual apprehension. Visual description in literature conveys a metaphorical perception of objects endowed with preordained anthropomorphic content; visual apprehension in fiction presents objects as they exist, subjectively, but without the customary presuppositions and general notions about their function and importance.

One method by which fiction conveys the visual apprehension of an object or setting rather than the visual description of the same is mentioned by Robbe-Grillet in

"Enigmes et transparence chez Raymond Roussel" (1963),[11] when he notes that Roussel's work, although condemned by conventional standards, is also coming to be acknowledged as among the most important fiction of the early twentieth century, its opacity being one of its most significant factors:

> Voyons d'abord l'opacité. C'est, aussi bien, une excessive transparence. Comme il n'y a jamais rien au-delà de la chose décrite, c'est-à-dire qu'aucune sur-nature ne s'y cache, aucun symbolism (ou alors c'est un symbolisme aussitôt proclamé, expliqué, détruit), le regard est bien obligé de s'arrêter à la surface même des choses . . . . Une transparence totale qui ne laisse subsister ni ombre ni reflet, cela revient en fait à une peinture en trompe-l'oeil. Plus s'accumulent les précisions, la minutie, les détails de forme et de dimension, plus l'objet perd de sa profondeur. C'est donc ici une opacité sans mystère: ainsi que derrière une toile de fond, il n'y a rien derrière ces surfaces, pas d'interieur, pas de secret, pas d'arrière-pensée. (p. 71)

In such passages, Robbe-Grillet says, Roussel's texts escape the complicity between man and object (which results from his projection of himself onto an object) to reach the point of visual apprehension where the excessive transparency makes an object so opaque that man no longer sees himself reflected in its lineaments. Heidegger's notion of Sicht may again be referred to here, this time in order to reach an understanding of Robbe-Grillet's conceptualization of the opacity and transparency of an object. In the passage quoted earlier from Sein und Zeit, Heidegger says that Dasein's sight is related to the transparency (Durchsichtigeit) which allows a full disclosure of Being-in-the-world; if Dasein is opaque (Undurchsichtigkeit) this results from a lack of acquaintance with the world. Transparency presupposes that this acquaintance, when accomplished, extends to objects:

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[11] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Enigmes et transparence chez Raymond Roussel," Pour un nouveau roman, pp. 70-76. All further references are to this edition of the essay and appear in the text.

> Für die existenziale Bedeutung von Sicht ist nur die Eigentümlichkeit des Sehens in Anspruch genommen, dass es das ihm zugänglich Seiende an ihm selbst unverdeckt begegnen lässt . . . . Die Tradition der Philosophie ist aber von Anfang an primär am "Sehen" als Zugangsart zu Seiendem und zu Sein orientiert. Um den Zusammenhang mit ihr zu wahren, kann man Sicht und Sehen so weit formalisieren, dass damit ein universaler Terminus gewonnen wird, der jeden Zugang zu Seiendem und zu Sein als Zugang überhaupt charakterisiert.[49]

In a literary text, if an entity is to be encountered unconcealedly in itself, Robbe-Grillet suggests that a transparency of monotonous detail denies that the object has a mystery to hide, allowing the object to move beyond the superficial opacity of first impression to a real opacity on another level. Roussel's technique requires the extra step beyond Heidegger's transition from opacity to transparency; the shift which Robbe-Grillet finds in Roussel's texts, opacity-transparency-opacity, is a necessity due to the nature of the literary text and the verbal aspect of depiction. Visual description can only become direct visual apprehension (in Heidegger's words termed ". . . der jeden Zugang zu Seiendem und zu Sein als Zugang überhaupt charakterisiert . . .") if the secondary and intermediate feature of the verbal is overcome through the dual opacity which the ". . . zugänglich Seiende an ihm selbst unverdeckt begegnen lässt."

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[49] Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 147.

Robbe-Grillet restates and expands the notion of subjective visual apprehension in literature in "Nouveau roman, homme nouveau" (1961) in a reply to those critics of his novels who understand his approach to object description, insisting on a particular separateness between man and object, as an attempt to dehumanize the universe, to cleanse it of man:

> Comme il n'y avait pas, dans nos livres, de "personnages" au sens traditionnel du mot, on en a conclu, un peu hâtivement, qu'on n'y rencontrait pas d'hommes du tout. C'était bien mal les lire. L'homme y est présent à chaque page, à chaque ligne, à chaque mot. Même si l'on y trouve beaucoup d'objets, et décrits avec minutie, il y a toujours et d'abord le regard qui les voit [my emphasis], la pensée qui les revoit, la passion qui les déforme. Les objets de nos romans n'ont jamais de présence en dehors des perceptions humaines, réeles ou imaginaires; ce sont des objets comparable à ceux de notre vie quotidienne, tels qu'ils occupent notre esprit à tout moment. (pp. 116-17)

Robbe-Grillet here relates visual apprehension of objects to the existence of things in everyday life, the present existence which man actually lives, one of the important characteristics of Heidegger's presentation of Dasein which may be explained in the following manner:

> . . . "facticity," the fact that I exist in an already existing world which is my world, which could no more exist without me than I could without it. Things in the world are not experienced as mere material objects but as tools, things "ready to hand" to be used in ways which are defined for me by the structure of this world.[1]

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[1] Anthony Manser, "Existentialism," Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas, ed. Philip P. Weiner (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1973), II,

Heidegger's understanding of Being-in-the-world indissolubly links man with the "everydayness" (Alltäglichkeit) of existence through which Being is disclosed,[82] in the immediacy or "ready to hand" (Zuhandenheit) of the object's presence within man's subjectivity.[83] Thus in Robbe-Grillet's idea of fiction man, as perceiver, inevitably exists in the manner in which objects are described, while not being present in the form of a traditional character. "Le regard qui les voit . . .," transposed into terms of fictional narrative, may be compared with narrative voice, along with "la pensée" and "la passion"; this narrative voice, become narrative vision, apprehends the objects, in the visual, intellectual, or emotional mode, as they appear in the novel. In his book on narrative consciousness George H. Szanto says:

> But each work of Robbe-Grillet, dominated by the integral consciousness of a specific narrator who is no longer controlled by a fear of or displeasure at his separation from the universe, defines a structure unique to the created character's consciousness. Robbe-Grillet need no longer explore the possibilities of reuniting man with his environment; he is content to examine the existing relationship between man and the world about him. The quest, though still present in his works, has been reduced to a motif; the internal form is lacking. Instead, Robbe-Grillet allows each of his narrators their peculiar story; he creates for them structures highly relevant to their needs.[84]

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[81](cont'd) 193.

[82] Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, pp. 166-67.

[83] Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 69.

[84] George H. Szanto, Narrative Consciousness: Structure and Perception in the Fiction of Kafka, Beckett, and Robbe-Grillet (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), pp.

These novel structures are generated in large part on a framework of visual perception. While in "Une Voie pour le roman futur" and in "Nature, humanisme, tragédie" Robbe-Grillet seems to be primarily preoccupied with redefining description in the novel as visual apprehension, in "Nouveau roman, homme nouveau" visual technique is directly related to narrative vision, or the larger, overall organization of the fiction.

In a brief article entitled "Notes sur la localisation et les déplacements du point de vue dans la description romanesque" (1958) Robbe-Grillet deals very specifically with narrative viewpoint as a visual problem, comparing techniques of point of view in fictional description with the role of the camera in film.[5] He notes that in the Balzacian novel there is little awareness of point of view in the strict, extrinsic sense of the term, that an object may be described without any indication of the exact position from which it is seen, except when it is depicted as part of the vision of a certain character who is known to be sitting or standing in a particular place. In such novels usually "il n'y a pas d'observateur du tout, le narrateur (c'est-à-dire ici l'auteur) est omniscient et se place partout à la fois" (p. 257). Unlike the Balzacian novel,

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[4](cont'd) 9-10.

[5] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Notes sur la localisation et les déplacements du point de vue dans la description romanesque," La Revue des Lettres Modernes, No. 36-38 (été 1958), 256-258. All further references to this essay appear in the text.

however, in film the nature of the cinematic medium demands a very precise choice of the place and angle from which something is perceived; "il faut bien que la photo soit prise d'un endroit donné; il faut bien que la caméra se trouve quelque part" (p. 257). To film a room one may choose an angle giving an idea of the whole, of one important element in the room, or develop a series of successive stills characterizing the room. To describe an action in a novel is simple if done so by an omniscient narrator, but the film director "doit inventer un artifice: déclaration d'un personnage, rêverie du héros . . ." (p. 257). Through an awareness of such cinematic techniques, as the exact choice of angle of regard and the structure of artifice in depicting an action, Robbe-Grillet believes that the novel in its turn indicates a consciousness of problems of depiction. In literature these new skills efface the omniscient author or narrator, the description of the world being taken over by man himself, if no longer in the shape of an actual character, in the form of "un oeil d'homme" (p. 258). This last statement provides another occasion for Robbe-Grillet to refute the critics who accuse him of presenting a dehumanized universe in his fiction, by pointing out that such an approach, while perhaps excluding character, does not exclude man but instead gives him the most important position, "celle de l'observateur" (p. 258). Narrative consciousness and narrative point of view as the framework of artifice thus seem to be the basic structuring principles of the new novel which Robbe-Grillet is speaking about; accordingly, the "eye of man," or man as observer, is fundamental both to the development of the structures and to their specific manifestation in a novel as person, thing, or object within the "everydayness" of existence which is part of man's Dasein.

The Balzacian novel once again serves as a starting point for Robbe-Grillet's discussion of description in the novel in the essay "Temps et description dans le récit d'aujourd'hui" (1963).[86] He deals more overtly with the self-conscious constitution of narrative structure already implied in "Notes sur la localisation," saying that in nineteenth century fiction visual descriptions of houses, furnishings, and clothing are in the image of man, demonstrating humanistic complicity:

> . . . chacun des murs ou des meubles de la maison représentait un double du personnage qui l'habitait . . . et se trouvait de surcroît soumis au même destin, à la même fatalité. Le lecteur trop pressé de connaître l'histoire pouvait même se croire autorisé à sauter les descriptions: il ne s'agissait que d'un cadre, qui se trouvait d'ailleurs avoir un sens identique à celui du tableau qu'il allait contenir. (p. 126)

In this type of novel, Robbe-Grillet suggests, descriptions--as frame--are in no way essential to the structure of the fiction for they reproduce a preexisting reality external to the fiction. With the nouveau roman, however, the role of description changes completely to affirm "sa fonction créatrice" (p. 127), which may be a dual movement of construction followed by destruction, blurring the contours of our previous understanding of reality. As visual apprehension, descriptive reference is thus limited to the self-conscious fiction it constructs, and narrative viewpoint is generated from within the text, an interiority that has a significant effect on point of view as a visual function, or as "l'oeil d'homme"; "le regard" makes it possible for the visual to act as a constructor of the text and consequently to penetrate the essential structure of the fiction, by-passing verbal intermediacy.

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[86] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Temps et description dans le récit d'aujourd'hui," Pour un nouveau roman, pp. 123-134. All further references are to this edition of the essay and appear in the text.

The discussion of such visual specifics as outline, shape, and colour in certain of the essays collected in _Pour un nouveau roman_ indicates a further expansion of Robbe-Grillet's ideas about the utilization of _le regard_ in the novel form. He suggests that even the visual mode in literature is not free of humanistic complicity, using as an example the identification of the hero of Sartre's _La Nausée_, Roquentin, with coloured objects which provoke his feeling of nausea. In "Nature, humanisme, tragédie" Robbe-Grillet says "la couleur est changeante, donc elle _vit_; c'est cela que Roquentin à découvert: les choses sont vivantes, _comme lui-même_" (p. 60); the sensation of colour in visual assimilation appears to be identified by Robbe-Grillet as part of the Cartesian dualism where man understands himself in analogy to physical substance, although apprehension of shape and outline do not result in the same reaction. To Robbe-Grillet:

> Le domaine de la vue . . . comporte lui-même différentes qualités d'apprehension: une forme, par example, sera généralement plus sûre qu'une couleur, qui change avec l'éclairage, avec le fond qui l'accompagne, avec le sujet qui la considère. (p. 59)

The shifting and anthropomorphic nature of colour in light and background contrasts with the role of shape and outline in Roquentin's perceptions, for he avoids drawing them into his definition of those things which are "jamais tout bonnement elles-mêmes et rien qu'elles-mêmes" (p. 60); colour is similar to the sense of touch allowing the object to manifest a "personality." Sight as the privileged sense, which refuses projection and identification between man and object and establishes instead an authentic relationship, is thus more applicable to outlines than colours (p. 65).

The attitude toward colour which Robbe-Grillet analyses in Sartre's La Nausée also finds its place in his position on the use of colour in his films. Conventional cinematography pretends that colour as it appears on the screen is "natural," but, because it is imbued with anthropomorphic connotations, it may be compared to the humanistic complicity which provokes Roquentin's nausea. While preferring the medium of black and white, Robbe-Grillet nonetheless has made films in colour:

> When I was first made to understand that the film industry no longer wanted black and white films, I thought that I would no longer make films. I remember that for L'Homme qui ment in particular I had had [sic] to fight the film industry in order to make the film in black and white. And really, this green forest is something that made me sick. I

> realized, at that moment, that one of the reasons for which I feared color in films was precisely the color green; I could not stand green in Eastman color.[67]

In his films Robbe-Grillet turns colour to his advantage, however, by underscoring its "artificiality" to "remind my viewers that I do not intend to 'recreate' life."[68] Thus in Glissements progressifs du plaisir (1974) the colour white represents the cultural theme of purity when Alice appears in a white apartment and an unnaturally white prison cell, making it impossible for the audience to take over and "naturalize" the colour.[69] Colour has thus proved to be beneficial in Robbe-Grillet's filmmaking as part of the framework of artifice which, in his novels, is characterized by the narrative consciousness. But his earlier preference for black and white film is comparable with the consequence of shape and outline in creating the form of visual apprehension in the new novel. Man is separated from his sole identification with the object, shape and outline allowing him to place it within his own knowledge of his Being-in-the-world, a possibility not proffered by the vagaries of colour.

The concept of outline as the most effective technique in the visual depiction of the object in the novel is paralleled on another, more general level by Robbe-Grillet's notions about the novel form in itself. In an essay in which he explains the outmoded nature of certain ideas about narrative plot, characterization, and social commitment, entitled "Sur quelques notions périmées" (1957),[10] his treatment of the new approach to fictional form and content includes the following statement:

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[67] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Images and Texts: A Dialogue," trans. Karlis Racevskis, Generative Literature and Generative Art, ed. David Leach, p. 40.

[68] Lillian Dumont and Sandi Silverberg, "An Interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet," French Review, 50 (1976-77), 654.

[69] Dumont, 655.

> Quand il [the writer] pense à un roman futur, c'est toujours une écriture qui d'abord lui occupe l'esprit, et réclame sa main. Il a en tête des mouvements de phrases, des architectures, un vocabulaire, des constructions grammaticales, exactement comme un peintre a en tête des lignes et des couleurs. (p. 41)

This assertion is made in the context of the indissolubility of the relationship between form and content, and while it treats colour as well as line as part of the nonprojective form in painting, in literature this still remains restricted to outline. In this case the outline to which Robbe-Grillet refers is the outline of the novel itself; as an essential step in the process of creation the author envisages the structural movement of a novel as a type of outline, an architecture based on grammatical and verbal formation which de-emphasizes the qualitative and projected humanistic aspects of a text. The suggestion that narrative structure is an architecture or outline is a means of explaining novel form as another way of visual apprehension, an additional confirmation that this mode of the visual is part of the essential structure of a fiction. In "Temps et description dans le récit d'aujourd'hui" Robbe-Grillet relates architectural construction to the depiction of the object where the text "invente des lignes, des plans, une architecture" (p. 127) often from the starting point of a tiny and unimportant fragment; this is also part of the "fonction créatrice" (p. 127) of the description.

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[10] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Sur quelques notions périmées," Pour un nouveau roman, pp. 25-44. All further references are to this edition of the essay and appear in the text.

Visual detail plays an important part in building the novelistic structure of visual apprehension as well. On the one hand, detail may risk the development of greater humanistic complicity in the fiction if:

> Se posant à l'improviste sur un détail, il l'isole, l'extrait, voudrait l'emporter en avant, constate son échec, s'acharne, ne réussit plus ni à l'enlever tout à fait ni à le remettre en place . . . le rapport d' "absurdité" n'est pas loin. Ou bien c'est la contemplation qui s'appesantit à tel point que tout se met à vaciller, à bouger, à se fondre . . . alors la "fascination" commence, et la "nausée."[11]

From another perspective, however, the use of detail in depiction may have other positive functions in the creation of the nouveau roman described by Robbe-Grillet. In "Enigmes et transparence" he notes that in Roussel's work there is great precision of detail almost always embodied in descriptions of statues, engravings, paintings, or crude drawings, allowing Roussel to place an intermediary artist between himself and the world of men: "Le texte que l'on nous propose est une relation concernant un double" (p. 75). Because certain remote or tiny elements are enlarged, it becomes apparent that the observer has been unable to examine them from close at hand and must, therefore, invent his description, and thus "la vue est ici une vue imaginaire" (p. 76). In the essay "Temps et description" he discusses another peculiarity of certain types of visual depiction: precision and the effect it has on the apprehension of the world:

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[11] Robbe-Grillet, "Nature, humanisme, tragédie," pp. 65-66.

> Le souci de précision qui confine parfois au délire (ces notions si peu visuelles de "droite" et de "gauche," ces comptages, ces mensurations, ces repères géométriques) ne parvient pas à empêcher le monde d'être mouvant jusque dans ses aspects les plus matériels et même au sein de son apparente immobilité. (p. 127)

Robbe-Grillet adds that, consequently, in such pages of precise visual description the interest is no longer in the thing described, but in the descriptive movement itself which is, as we have seen, the creative factor at the essential base of the novel structure.

Robbe-Grillet's conception of the nouveau roman appears to allot three important functions to visual detail. When utilized in the depiction of a statue or painting, a metadescription results which stresses the artificial nature of the verbal text and underlines the self-conscious approach of the author, along with the entry of external visual forms into the text. The enlargement of remote or tiny elements through visual detail also serves to enhance the contrived nature of the fiction, but it indicates as well the activation of the imaginary within the visual apprehension. Just as unexpectedly, obsessive precision of detail does not anticipate a "realistic" depiction in its use of careful measurement and geometric points of reference; instead, the description, through its temporality, its movement as part of the novel structure, makes its precision a precision of the moment, mutable within the larger structure of fictional time. This final point of interpretation of visual detail is another element refuting the relevance to contemporary fiction of Balzacian description, which assumed that the verbal construction of a visual picture of an object, once formulated, was immutable. Robbe-Grillet's originality of approach to visual description in the novel resides in part in his idea that the fiction provides a temporal framework, not constructed on a permanent basis through the depiction of objects, but rather on a vacillating structure in which the instability of the spatial designation of the objects, as aptly described by Roland Barthes in "Littérature objective," is built on the fluctuations of a temporality that is nonlinear. Such a stance in relation to the spatiality and temporality of fiction is another reminder that a text should be self-conscious in the employment of visual detail in relation to the spatial/temporal mode.

One effect of such use of detail, strongly emphasized in Robbe-Grillet's writings, is the appearance of the frozen gesture or instantaneous image in the literary text. In the essay on Roussel, Robbe-Grillet says that certain of his detailed images are characterized by their "instantanéité"

(p. 76), everything being given as in a frozen movement:

> . . . mais figé au beau milieu de ce mouvement, immobilisé par la représentation qui laisse en suspens tous les gestes, chutes, déferlements, etc. . . . (p. 76)

While objects and gestures are depicted as being in motion, the kinesis which is arrested through the "instantaneity" of the images results in their severance from conventional projections of meaning and from an ending which would hurl them into the perceptual imprisonment characteristic of such meaning. The frozen image or gesture is another aspect of visual detail which negates the linear passage of time in the text; the words may continue to move forward, but within the middle of the onward movement lies an object or gesture which is "instantaneous," denying conventional temporal expectations and asserting on one level the importance of the liberation of the description from habitual linguistic usage and on another level the unique and independent nature of the text's structure. Breaking with the discourse of which the image would normally be a part, the frozen image escapes the subjectivity which has defined man in terms of physical substances and reminds him of his Being-in-the-world as a subjective entity free from preconceived ideas and temporal structures; he becomes aware through this image that the fiction is functioning as visual apprehension rather than as anthropomorphic visual description. The liberation from imposed meaning and from time constraints thus achieved enables Robbe-Grillet to propose a use of the visual image released from pictorialism (or wordpainting) and working independently to build the fictional structure. Escaping anthropomorphism and the subjectivity of Cartesian dualism, visual detail and the frozen image have the effect of precluding transcendence; "de ce monde-ci, nous découvrons que nous ne pouvons plus sortir" (p. 76).

The idea of the frozen image or gesture may be further understood through Robbe-Grillet's discussions of cinematography and of the photograph. The frozen image is part of the cinematographic style as of the literary style: the camera cuts an image at a certain point in the film while the frozen gesture cuts an image at a certain point in the novel. In "Temps et description" Robbe-Grillet emphasizes that, contrary to commonly held notions of the cinematographic image, it is not the objectivity of the camera's eye, but instead its subjectivity, which may be paralleled with the method of image description in the nouveau roman: "la possibilité de présenter avec toute l'apparence de l'objectivité la moins contestable ce qui n'est, aussi bien, que rêve ou souvenir, en un mot ce qui n'est qu'imagination" (p. 128). In an interview given by Robbe-Grillet on the role of photography in eroticism (1966), subjective perception on the level of the photograph is also related by him to the frozen image or gesture. He suggests that the camera is the instrument by which man immobilizes an erotic image of a woman that is analogous to his imaginative conception of her; in this process the real woman becomes only a pale reflection of her photographic image--an imaginative construct is more important than reality.[12] When compared with the frozen image as it is described in a text, there is once again present in the photograph the self-conscious or artificial aspect which is so central to Robbe-Grillet's understanding of the visual mode in literature. However, the immobilized gesture in a fiction or in a photograph emphasizes two levels of object perception that help achieve the artificiality: firstly, the apprehension of the phenomenological, nonanthropomorphic existence of an object and secondly, the imaginative, subjective impression which causes a man to choose a particular image of a woman for the photograph.

While Robbe-Grillet's writings and interviews present us with a many-faceted approach to visual aspects of the fictional literary form, almost all his suggestions are directed, nonetheless, to the self-conscious structuring of the text from the most specific to the most general level. The visual and non-metaphorical adjective should be used, he suggests, instead of the traditional literary description which assumes omniscience, to indicate that objects and settings can exist apart from man's humanistic, projective assimilation of them. This attitude of projection is overcome in the visual apprehension where an object becomes an integral part of human awareness or man's

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[12] Pierre Deméron, "A Voyeur in the Labyrinthe: An Interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet," trans. Richard Howard, Evergreen Review, No. 43 (Oct. 1966), 46-49, 90, 92.

Being-in-the-world through Sicht or sight as explained by Heidegger in Sein und Zeit, the problem of verbal intermediacy posed by the concept of the visual within a literary form being dealt with using such techniques as the dual level of opacity employed by Raymond Roussel in his fiction. The emphasis on shape and outline in depicting individual objects and settings, paralleled by the idea of an architecturally designed novel, affirms a process of careful and conscious construction, when contrasted with description as the impressionistic use of colour and a literary form amorphously at the mercy of a "realistic" content, the mode used to convey this self-consciousness here being the narrative vision which acts as the observant "eye" or "le regard." The use of minute and excessive detail in imagery, as well as the notion of the frozen image (particularly as it relates to the erotic photograph), makes allowance for the creative operation of the imagination as a visual concept, both instantaneity and meticulous detail being techniques which relate to the mutability of the object and the non-linear temporality of the novel form proposed by Robbe-Grillet. His explanation and classification of the visual aspects of a new type of fiction are almost all focused on the structure of a novel which is so self-conscious as to dominate and determine the thematic content and its outcome.

Whether or not the idea of visual apprehension can be useful with reference to a direct relationship between

Robbe-Grillet's novels and specific paintings or movements in modern art remains to be seen, but in any case Robbe-Grillet himself provides us with some clues to help solve his problem; various articles and interviews with the author include a mention of his interest in certain painters or their influence on general features of his novels. Although such hints may be employed in a feasible manner only if considered along with his statements about the visual as a part of literary form, they remain nonetheless important suggestions to be utilized in a conceptualization of the visual mode of his fiction. One of the earliest declarations about his interest in pop art and the paintings of Roy Lichtenstein was published in Studio International (1968) where Robbe-Grillet says that, in the area of the plastic arts, his experiences as a writer are similar to those of Lichtenstein as a painter, and to pop art as a whole, without limiting it to a precise definition or a particular school. He defines this experience as:

> . . . the integration in a plastic work of, on the one hand, the object belonging to an acquisitive society, for example, the comic strips--but, in fact, everything that can be included in some vague way under the name Pop art, without limiting it to a school in any precise way.[13]

At the same time that he approves of this formal, pop art method Robbe-Grillet notes that he disagrees with Lichtenstein's conceptualization of his own discovery: that the destruction of representative depth in his work, or its flatness, represents a critique of flatness which is also a refutation of the superficial, dehumanized nature of society. According to Robbe-Grillet such a stance looks to the past rather than to the future for a new understanding of experience, while in reality the peculiarity of this "flattening" of the modern world in art may be understood as the elimination of outmoded, metaphysical metaphor and the introduction of a new, as yet undefined, type of metaphor. Robbe-Grillet confirms his interest in pop art during the 1975 Colloque de Cerisy on his work:

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[13] Alain Robbe-Grillet and Paul Schwartz, "Antihumanism in Art," Studio International, 175, No. 899 (April 1968), 168-69; rpt. in John Coplans, ed., Roy Lichtenstein (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. 165.

> Je me suis intéréssé vivement, et j'ai été l'un des premiers en France, au Pop Art américain: Lichtenstein, Rauschenberg, Rosenquist. . . . J'ai continué à fréquenter cette peinture-là [Rauschenberg] et celle qui lui a succédé, Spoerri, Christo, tous ces gens qu'on a groupés sous l'étiquette de nouveau réalisme jusqu'à la grande exposition de Milan . . . .[4]

He also identifies specifically here the names of other painters who interest him, including, among the American pop aritsts, James Rosenquist and Robert Rauschenberg, and among the nouveau réalistes, a parallel movement in French art, the Hungarian born Christo Javacheff and the Rumanian Daniel Spoerri. In an interview with David Hayman published in 1975 Robbe-Grillet mentions his personal acquaintance with Lichtenstein, Rosenquist, and Rauschenberg and his sense of artistic affinity with them as opposed to the distance he feels between his writing and that of the leaders of the New York literary circle such as Saul Bellow and Norman Mailer. He does make an exception, however, for two of these novelists; "There are two American writers who fascinate me because I find them closer to what I'm doing: Burroughs and above all Nabokov."[15] In the 1979 interview with Germaine Brée already quoted from, he enlarges upon the specificity of the similarities between his work and pop art as a system for maintaining a freedom within society's ideological constraints:

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[4] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Robbe-Grillet à la question," Robbe-Grillet: analyse, théorie, II, Colloque de Cerisy, 1080, 10/18, ed. Jean Ricardou (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1976), p. 426.

> It consists of detaching fragments from society's discourse and using them as raw materials to construct something else. In society's discourse, these are concepts, but I detach them from their context, take them as building blocks, I push them back to the status of signifiers in order to build another language, which is my own.[16]

Rather than discussing the specific form on which his novels and pop art are built in terms of the integration of object and image as he does earlier in the interview with Schwartz, Robbe-Grillet outlines the system within which this integration takes place in terms of discourse, language, and signification, so that literary and visual aspects may be more easily paralleled.

The importance of the role of the reader/spectator in contemporary literature and art comes to the fore as a central point in the interviews with Schwartz and Hayman;

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[15] David Hayman, "An Interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet," Contemporary Literature, 16, No. 3 (1975), 276.

[16] Germaine Brée, p. 93.

with Schwartz Robbe-Grillet uses this issue to indicate the mode of his own interest in modern painting, suggesting that the participation of the spectator may be called "formative" in modern art.[97] Quoting Marcel Duchamp's phrase that it is the viewer who makes a painting, he notes that this statement set the stage for the new rapport between author/painter and reader/spectator in contemporary works. He remarks upon Duchamp's idea again in the discussion with Hayman and expands upon its relationship to literature:

> One could say that the reader of one of my works or the spectator at one of my films is not really in front of but within. The work does not exist except through his presence. That is, unless there is someone within it who can reproduce the creative process. The relationship between author, work, and public is no longer the relationship between someone who creates a finished work and another who receives it. We now have a work that can exist only in a creative motion, which has its primary existence when the author writes or makes a film and exists a second time when the reader, the spectator . . . is again within the work as if he were himself creating it.[98]

The significance of a creative process, apparent in the reader's or spectator's relationship to the art work, also has another essential function. In the Colloque de Cérisy Robbe-Grillet makes clear that his interest in painting, both in his own and that of other artists, resides first of all with the materials used: the paint, brush, paper, canvas, and frame. A close examination of the use of these materials, of the "painterly" aspect of an art work constitutes, in the same mode as the analysis Robbe-Grillet proposes for the readers of his texts, an analysis of the process of creation; it is not surprising, therefore, that he says that his later colour films have many "pictural" preoccupations: "l'écran est un support où je mets des couleurs."[99] His film L'Eden et après was influenced by the work of two painters, Mondrian and Klee: ". . . Klee parce que la Tunisie a joué un grand rôle dans son expérience personnelle, et . . . Mondrian parce qu'il avait horreur du vert."[100] Although the use of Mondrian's rectangles helped make pictorial art one of the principal generators of the film,[101] it is not the qualities of abstraction in Mondrian's paintings that interest Robbe-Grillet, rather "the effect of abstraction on reality, for example roofs which are all of a sudden nothing but shapes."[102] In other words, line and shape are important as the materials which create the painting. The influence of Duchamp is also apparent in this film, as Robbe-Grillet notes, in the scenes of a nude going up and down a staircase: "Which is to say that all along, the film was a kind of meditation on the origins of contemporary painting."[103] He also mentions that there are clear references to Yves Klein's painting in

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[97] Alain Robbe-Grillet and Paul Schwartz, p. 165.

[98] David Hayman, 274.

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[99] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Robbe-Grillet à la question," p. 427.

[100] Bernard Dufour, "Alain Robbe-Grillet et les images: entretien," Art Press, No. 22 (Nov. 1978), 6.

[101] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Images and Texts," p. 41.

[102] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Images and Texts," p. 41.

[103] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Images and Texts," p. 41.

Glissements progressifs du plaisir: "Klein's paintings are created under the eyes of the spectator, on the screen,"[104] indicating that the screen is a support or surface on which the materials, the designs and the colours, of Klein's paintings are deployed.

Most of Robbe-Grillet's statements mentioned here link his writing with the general approach of pop art, for the work of the other painters named, Mondrian, Klee, Klein, and Duchamp, seems to be stressed as an example of how, when paintings are used in his films, the material component of a painting as opposed to its content, whether abstract or realistic, is most important. His work of the 1970s, however, and his publication of several of his texts with photographs and paintings connect his writing even more concretely with visual art and with certain art movements, surrealism in particular in La Belle Captive (paintings by Magritte) and Construction d'un temple en ruines à la Déesse Vanadé (etchings by Paul Delvaux). Among what Bruce Morrissette terms Robbe-Grillet's works of intertextual assemblage,[105] his first books include texts published with photographs by David Hamilton Rêves de jeunes filles (1971)[106] and Les Desmoiselles d'Hamilton (1972),[107] the texts later appearing as part of the Robbe-Grillet novel *Topologie d'une cité fantôme* (1975), while the manuscript accompanying Irina Ionesco's photographs in *Temple aux miroirs* (1977)[108] is included in the novel *Souvenirs du triangle d'or* (1978). Portions of *La Belle Captive* and *Construction d'un temple* appear in *Topologie*, and part of the text of *Construction d'un temple* is repeated in *Souvenirs*. His introduction to the catalogue of an art exhibition by Jasper Johns entitled *La Cible* (1978),[109] also part of *Souvenirs*, indicates his interest in the painting of this important precursor of pop art and his work with Robert Rauschenberg on *Traces suspectes en surface*, also part of *Topologie*, again suggests an affinity with the techniques of pop-assemblagist art. But his preface to the illustrated, 1980 edition of the work of the important surrealist precursor, Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, attests to Robbe-Grillet's persistent interest in surrealism, as does his preface to an exhibition catalogue of the works of a contemporary French surrealist artist, Gérard Titus-Carmel.[110] Robbe-Grillet's attention to certain types of art is by no means exclusive; he has even written a short piece as a response to one of Jackson Pollock's abstract expressionist paintings (*Full Fathom Five*, 1947), entitled *Araignée fantôme* (1982).[111]

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[104] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Images and Texts," p. 41.

[105] Bruce Morrissette, Intertextual Assemblage, p. 9.

[106] Alain Robbe-Grillet and David Hamilton, Rêves de jeune filles (Paris: Laffont, 1971).

[107] Alain Robbe-Grillet and David Hamilton, Les Desmoiselles d'Hamilton (Paris: Laffont, 1972).

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[108] Alain Robbe-Grillet and Irina Ionesco, *Temple aux miroirs* (Paris: Seghers-Laffont, 1977).

[109] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "La Cible," *Jasper Johns* (Paris: Centre Nationale d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1978).

[110] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Préface," *Dessins pour Lautréamont*, Sibylle Ruppert (Paris: Galerie Bijan Aalam - Éditions Natiris, 1980); Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Préface," *Titus-Carmel*, Werner Spies, Derrière le miroir, 230 (Paris: Éditons Maeght, 1980).

Robbe-Grillet is very careful, however, to distinguish between the different levels on which the images function in relation to the text. In *La Belle Captive* and in the volumes which include photographs by David Hamilton, where a text is placed next to preexistent images, he is interested in presenting the problematical nature of the relationship between text and image: the effects of resemblance, but more importantly the effects of distance that result in an "ensemble of contradictions" putting the image in a state of crisis.[112] The second level at which the connection between the verbal and visual art is active is exemplified by the volume with the Delvaux etchings, *Construction d'un temple*, a form of collaboration which disappointed Robbe-Grillet's original expectations:

> My second experiment was with Delvaux. I suggested that we write a book together . . . . There are ten chapters in all, and the idea was for me to write an initial chapter to which Delvaux "replied" with an engraving. I was then to write a second chapter keeping in mind what he'd suggested in the engraving, and we changed hands like that ten times . . . . But Delvaux didn't really respect this give and take. So that everything considered, the text evolved nearly all by itself.[113]

The third level of interaction between text and image (and the second category of collaboration, which Robbe-Grillet considers the most interesting and successful), is constituted in the creative process of his work with Rauschenberg. Rauschenberg respected the idea of an exchange between author and artist and reacted inventively to each portion of the text rather than illustrating it, enabling Robbe-Grillet to work the artist's material back into his text, responding to and extrapolating upon it, a much more radical arrangement than that with Delvaux.[114] The fourth level of connection between verbal and visual, which overlaps with the other three, consists of the novels or sections of text published both in conjunction with paintings or photographs and independently (usually as part of an extended text). The origin of this writing is another important aspect which must be taken into consideration when looking at the dialectical nature of the relationship between text and image. Robbe-Grillet clearly delineates the significance of this approach:

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[111] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Araignée fantôme," *Jackson Pollock*, ed. Daniel Abadie and Claire Stoullig (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1982), p. 144.

[112] Claude Duverlie, 529.

[113] Duverlie, 530.

> What interests me about using images in the book is this distancing, this apparent movement between the text and the image. But it's clear that I can just as easily do without images . . . . That's why I published both of them--with and without images--to show that for me the text exists independently of any image as well for the play between image and text. So that in Topologie three other image-free experiments occur using image-makers: Delvaux, Rauschenberg and Hamilton.[115]

One finds here an insistence on the productive process as many-sided, not only as part of the creative motion of the text in the face of both authorial and reader reaction which Robbe-Grillet describes in the interview with Hayman, but also as integral to two relationships: firstly, that between text and image and secondly, the one between the image-related text and the new text. Even though the author insists that his texts can exist independently from the images, the dual form of publication inevitably provokes three salient questions as to its consequences: what is the nature of the collaborative process in all its variety, what is the relative importance of the influence of the visual on the written, the written on the visual, and of independent generation, and what is the significance of the alliance with different artists belonging to movements as varied as surrealism, pop art, assemblagist art, and with different photographers who employ greatly divergent styles?

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[114] Duverlie, 531.

[115] Duverlie, 529-30.

While a detailed analysis of these three considerations would necessarily involve a close examination of Robbe-Grillet's work of the 1970s, which is not within the scope of this thesis, they demonstrate, nevertheless, that visual art and its images continue to increase in importance in his literary experimentation, a fact that should be remembered when looking at the role of painting and the visual in his early novels. His explanations about the verbal-visual works also shed light on his definitions of the pictural and anecdotal nature of a painting, and the generative origins of verbal creation, as well as on the representational effects of literature, all of which could be essential aids in analyzing the early fiction. In outlining the two ways in which he uses a work of visual art in the textual production of the 1970s, Robbe-Grillet refers to the term "pictural" apparently as the visual, spatial, and painterly properties of a painting or photograph and the word "anecdotal" as the thematics of the work. A visual image can thus motivate his writing in two ways: either through what may be an extremely banal anecdotal quality or by pictural attributes which present some stimulating formal quality.[116] The incentive of imagery, used in this fashion, enables Robbe-Grillet to formulate (in the case of novels such as *Topologie* published without images, but which contain portions of text already created in relation to one or more paintings) a particular system of generation that he dissociates from the systems used in the novels published earlier than 1970:

> . . . for the first time I wanted the generators to be completely external, that is, for them to be supplied by others who spoke to me and whose sensitivity was often close to mine on certain points--like Hamilton because he likes young girls. But sometimes, on the contrary, it's extremely distant, for instance, Rauschenberg's. With Delvaux, there are similarities, but with Rauschenberg very few, except that I like his painting very much and he likes my writing a lot. But not much thematically in common, if you will, with Rauschenberg.[117]

In *Topologie*, then, external generators are supplied by images, a generative method which allows one to link certain visual works directly with a text, although there is a modification which takes place in the function of the images through the intermediacy of the novel structure which Robbe-Grillet, as author, creates around them. The intervention of the fictional structure in the relation between image and text, through the process of generation, does not break the significance of the direct impact of the visual on the verbal if the development of the image is considered as the series: original image--fictional structure--transformed image. Such a technique cannot be directly representational, but of Ricardou's argument which completely denies the representational effect of literature Robbe-Grillet says:

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[116] Duverlie, 531.

[117] Beverly Livingston, "An Interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet," *Yale French Studies*, 57 (1978), 228-237.

> [I] do agree that literature does not try to represent, cannot hope to represent, even scorns any attempt to represent. But where I disagree is in knowing that these representational effects constantly are there and probably effect the understanding of the text.'''

The representational effect in Topologie is a mediated one; in this lies the dialectic of both literature's refusal to represent and the representational outcome.

Although Robbe-Grillet's statements on generation and representation are made in reply to inquiries about his work of the 1970s, they suggest one line of research which may be followed in an investigation into the problem of the relationship between his earlier novels and visual art. He declares that, in the case of these works, paintings have not served as textual generators and that resemblances between passages in these novels and certain paintings are

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''' Duverlie, 534.

indicative of a similar "sensibilité" between himself and one or more artists, particularly the surrealists.[119] But within the context of this notion of sensibilité, the role of the pictural and the anecdotal in the image (and its representational function, defined by Robbe-Grillet in these interviews), is a major issue which should be raised in a discussion of the visual in the novels from Les Gommes to Projet pour une révolution à New York.

The publication of Robbe-Grillet's collaborative verbal-visual texts has provoked a great flurry of interest in the "visual" aspects of his fiction in general, resulting in the publication of interviews interrogating him about this aspect of his work. In one 1976 conversation it is suggested to him that, as both novelist and filmmaker, he perhaps turns a novel into a film or a film into a novel "because [his] writing seems so 'visual'," to which he replies:

> I think this visual aspect of my writing is a bit of an illusion! You know, I do not consider myself at all like a novelist who makes movies, or like a cineaste who writes: for me these are two completely separate activities.[120]

In another interview with Bernard Dufour (1978) he says of the relationship between literature and art:

> L'idée d'établir un parallèle entre les arts m'est plutôt antipathique. Il y a des rapports peut-être, des échanges, ou des clins d'oeil. Mais les matières

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[119] Personal interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet, 11 October 1983.

[120] Maxime de la Falaise McKendry, "Interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet: Is He an Onanistic Agronomist?" Interview (April 1976), 32.

> travaillées sont trop différentes pour que des correspondances précises soient pertinentes.[121]

That he has maintained a consistent attitude towards this topic is apparent in an early interview with Claude Bonnefoy (1962), where he develops a similar idea about the specific relationship between literature and photography:

> La photographie m'est-elle utile en tant qu'écrivain? Je vous répondrai qu'il n'y a aucun rapport entre une description et une image. L'image montre, la description détruit. Mais il y a probablement des rapports entre tout ce qu'on fait et il y a sans doute un rapport entre mes préoccupations de photographe et ce que j'écris. Et si les rôles de la photographie et de l'écriture sont antagonistes, la vision est la même.[122]

These comments, although apparently a denial of the influence of the visual and of painting on his texts, are in reality a response to those who are unaware of what he considers the essential intermediate function of the verbal in the use of imagery, a notion which becomes clear in his discussion of the relationship between description and image in the first of these two interviews: "[A]s soon as one starts to describe images, one has another object. This object is the description itself, the image."[123] He disagrees with the contemporary school of French psychoanalysts grouped under Jacques Lacan who promote the idea that dreaming consists of a description, or an account made up of words:

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[121] Dufour, 6.

[122] Claude Bonnefoy/Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Des écrivains chasseurs d'images," Arts, No. 890, 14-20 Nov. 1962, p. 3.

[123] McKendry, 32.

> Lacan says at the outset: "The unconscious is structured like a language," and, starting from there, he totally dismisses dream images in favor of the description of dreams.[124]

To Robbe-Grillet description is a linguistic structure, but imagery in a text, which enables the reader to see, is a visual structure. In fiction an image may have a truly visual purpose, but that is only momentary; the image will continue to evolve within the description, and as it does so it will become more obscure as the instantaneous visual clarity is lost within the linguistic structure. When an image is generated externally, as in Topologie, the third stage transformed image is also momentary, if it retains its visual aspect. In making this distinction between description and image as part of a fictional technique, Robbe-Grillet also implies a parallel with the function of language and image on the general level of man's existence in the world; in a discussion of the history of visualization in the book Seeing with the Mind's Eye M. and N. Samuels point out that primitive man related to the world through visualization, but that with the development of language "words came to serve not only to evoke images or experiences but to enable the speaker to establish distance between himself and experience."[125] Literature and the novel genre are part of this distancing, but with the concept of the visual, momentary, and dissolving image Robbe-Grillet attempts to bring fiction back into a more direct relationship with experience using a restructuring of perception, a process that may best be understood through a close examination of his novels.

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[124] McKendry, 32.

[125] Mike Samuels and Nancy Samuels, Seeing with the Mind's Eye: The History, Techniques, and Uses of Visualization, Bookworks Book (New York: Random House, 1975), p. 17.

The differentiation between description and image which Robbe-Grillet outlines in the 1976 interview represents a maturation of his ideas on the visual in fiction expressed in the essays in Pour un nouveau roman: the dissolution of the Cartesian dualism and the reconstruction of man's independent subjectiyity, the fictional form that designates the spatial instability of the object within a nonlinear temporal framework, the visual apprehension in literature which establishes authentic relationships with the objects of everyday life, and the importance to the novel of the escape from humanistic complicity that may be accomplished with the use of the nonmetaphorical visual adjective. All of these conceptions point toward the belief that fiction should be self-consciously structured so as to help reestablish the possibility of man's direct and personal experience of his world through the perceptual process of visual apprehension and the involvement of imagery in the novel form. Heidegger's concept of Dasein helps clarify the philosophical impetus of Robbe-Grillet's restructuring of vision in fiction in a perspective on objects as "ready-to-hand" and on existence as "everydayness," through the transparency of sight (Sicht), although the intermediate function of the verbal makes it necessary to extrapolate upon these ideas when referring to literature. Robbe-Grillet's awareness of this matter of description as a problem in itself, apparent at all stages of his thought on the novel form, does not encourage an analysis of the visual aspects of his early novels in terms of the traditional, pictorialist or thematic approaches to the relations between literature and the arts.

To formulate a comprehensive definition of Robbe-Grillet's ideas about literature and the visual, however, remains a problem in spite of his commentary. Although there is a certain logical and evolutionary polemic about the topic of relations between literature, the visual, and painting in his essays and statements, Robbe-Grillet does not pretend to be a literary theoretician;[126] with due respect to this attitude it is necessary to shape some meaningful system that can be utilized in an exploration of the subject. But his declarations have been made, for the most part, in response to critical misunderstanding of, and reaction to, his novels. This authorial self-consciousness, and the narrative self-consciousness, which characterizes the form of Robbe-Grillet's nouveau roman, means that such a system can be complete only in consideration of a close analysis of his fiction, taking under advisement his explanations. Robbe-Grillet's cognizance of the tradition of surrealist art is self-evident in the case of Magritte and

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[126] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "A quoi servent les théories," Pour un nouveau roman, pp. 7-13.

Delvaux but he also acknowledges his familiarity with the painting of Hans Bellmer and with the work of Man Ray and their relationship to aspects of his novel;[127] his continuing interest in surrealism is apparent in the preface to the Titus-Carmel catalogue. The abstract art of Mondrian, Klee, and Klein appears as an influence in his films where the structures of painting serve as generators, as do certain of Duchamp's works. He was a major inspiration for the surrealists and an important precursor of pop art, both in the ideas he provoked and in his limited production. The interest Duchamp's work holds for Robbe-Grillet is not surprising; he admits that he is acquainted with, and interested in, American pop artists such as Lichtenstein, Rosenquist, Rauschenberg, and Jasper Johns, as well as Tom Wesselmann and Jime Dine,[128] an affinity which is reflected in his appreciation of the French nouveau réalistes Christo and Spoerri. Such information serves to directly connect Robbe-Grillet with certain artists and to strongly suggest the correlation of his fiction with art movements, most obviously surrealism and pop/assemblagist art, but in itself it is not enough to approach a discussion of the relationship between his early novels and contemporary painting.

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[127] Personal interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet, 11 October, 1983.

[128] Personal interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet, 17 October, 1983.

Robbe-Grillet reveals that, while he made attempts at painting in a style reminiscent of Cezanne as an adolescent, he completely dropped such efforts until 1973 when he began to work in this medium again, but in 1975 his production remained at the level of "brouillons" which he had no desire to discuss or exhibit. He does say that:

> La peinture dont j'ai envie, enfin qui tourne dans ma tête, est une peinture où il y aura encore de la couleur, des pinceaux, un support . . . .[129]

In the issue of Obliques devoted to his work, nine of his paintings are reproduced, untitled, but labelled as "collages de journal, peinture à l'huile et vernis à parquet" and dated 1978; they may be described as newspaper collages with painted marks added exclusively in red, with one exception where the colour blue is used.[130] In the same periodical a 1974 photograph is reprinted showing the author being filmed by the Japanese filmmaker Naoyo Yoda, as he paints in his New York workshop, and he also published his own collage, using elements of Jasper Johns' paintings, with the preface to the Johns catalogue.[131] However Robbe-Grillet is not yet committed to public exhibition of his painting and it seems preferable, therefore, to keep an examination of the relations between his fiction and modern painting within the parameters of his statements about his interest in other artists and in his collaboration with them. But the fact that he does work privately as an artist would seem to indicate an awareness of painting materials, which he notes is important to his films:

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[129] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Robbe-Grillet à la question," p. 427.

[130] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Peintures," Obliques (Alain Robbe-Grillet), No. 16-17, Plates I-VIII, pp. 240-41.

[131] "Robbe-Grillet et la peinture," Obliques, p. 201; Alain Robbe-Grillet, "La Cible" Jasper Johns, p. 11.

> . . . la "surface écranique," comme disent maintenant les spécialistes, c'est aussi une toile. Par exemple, quand j'ai commencé à faire des films couleur, ça a été pour moi un changement aussi radical que de passer du fusain à l'huile.[132]

An acquaintance with the substances of painting may perhaps translate itself into a form of visual *sensibilité* in his novels, just as his consciousness of the structuring of the object and image and its ideological implications in American pop art has, he acknowledges, affected his fiction. Thus this type of formal cognizance of modern painting is also related to the idea of *sensibilité*, a concept which may include the author's awareness of certain ideas or attitudes of a type of art on a more general level. For instance, Robbe-Grillet's close acquaintance with the paintings of the proto-surrealist Giorgio de Chirico in the private collection of Jean Paulhan, at the time of his writing of *Les Gommes* and *Le Voyeur*, may have affected some of the ideas and images in these novels, particularly in view of his general interest in surrealism.[133] It appears that the visual aspect of Robbe-Grillet's early novels may be approached in "concrete terms,"[134] and on firm ground, with an analysis based on two different concepts: that of visual technique, particularly of the visual (as opposed to the descriptive) image, and that of "sensibilité" (as mentioned by Robbe-Grillet and discussed in this chapter).

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[132] Dufour, 6.

[133] Personal interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet, 11 October, 1983. James Thrall Soby, in *Giorgio de Chirico* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1955), p. 8, says that Paulhan owned "several major works of the artist's first Paris years," apparently referring to the period from 1911-1915.

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[134] Jean Seznec, "Art and Literature: A Plea for Humility," New Literary History, 3 (1972), 572.

# III. VISUAL TECHNIQUE IN THE NOVELS OF ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET

The preceding discussion demonstrates Robbe-Grillet's interest both in the visual aspects of fiction, and in the relationship between literature and painting, but the real significance of the author's pronouncements about visual elements can only be determined by a close examination of their use and evolution in his novels. The necessity of such an approach, analysing the relationship between his theory and his practice, is confirmed by Robbe-Grillet's statement in his "Fragment autobiographique imaginaire" (1978) about his activity as a "theoretician":

> On m'a si souvent, d'interviews en colloques, demandé pourquoi j'écris, que j'avais fini par considérer la question comme appartenant au domaine du sens, de la _ratio_, qui cherche à imposer ses règles de pensée (et partant sa dictature) à une activité dont la mobilité sans cesse lui échappe. Je me contentais donc de proposer, pour meubler le silence de l'écriture, diverses banalités oiseuses, sinuosités qui se mordent la queue, ou métaphores dont le scintillement tient lieu de maxime. C'était mieux, en tout cas, que les morceaux de catéchisme.[1]

In the light of this revelation, his comments about literature and the visual published as essays or interviews, should be considered as fragmentary and undogmatic. An overview of these statements should be established nonetheless, and their importance determined by examining them in conjunction with the visual aspects of his novels. But one should remember that his nonauthoritarian literary stance is so marked that even his autobiography becomes fiction:

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[1] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Fragment autobiographique imaginaire," _Minuit_, No. 31 (Nov. 1978), pp. 3-4.

> Je ne suis pas homme de vérité, ai-je dit, mais non plus de mensonge, ce qui reviendrait au même. Je suis une sorte d'explorateur, résolu, mal armé, imprudent, qui ne croit pas à l'existence antérieure durable du pays où il trace, jour après jour, un chemin possible. Je ne suis pas un maître à penser, mais un compagnon de route, d'invention, ou d'aléatoire recherche. Et c'est encore dans une fiction que je me hasarde ici.[2]

In writing fiction Alain Robbe-Grillet undertakes a great adventure, an uncertain quest, validated by discoveries made along the route travelled, not by the achievement of a final goal originally perceived from a great distance. His statements about literature and the visual are consistent with his attitudes towards fiction in general, and, therefore, they are provisional, constantly open to change and development.

A certain consistency, or core, of visual technique, however, will appear in the text of his novels, and might prove enlightening as to the relationship between his fiction and modern painting. If Robbe-Grillet draws upon certain basic visual principles in his role as "explorateur" of literature, their clarification could even help in further explication of other complex and protean aspects of his work. The problem presented by an analysis of the fundamental visual techniques in his novels should thus be addressed for two significant reasons: primarily, as an aid in understanding the forms and concepts which connect his work with modern painting, and, secondly, to assist in explicating various narrative aspects of these texts. The need to establish the parameters of Robbe-Grillet's visual technique, before relating his fiction to modern painting, is reinforced by Wylie Sypher's notion expressed in Four Stages of Renaissance Style: Transformations in Art and Literature, in the first chapter called "The Analogy of Forms in Art." Sypher believes that for both writers and artists "a style is not so much a 'way of seeing the world' as it is a technique for representing what is already seen";[3] technique, which in modern art may take the place of style, is a reminder that the perceptions reproduced are those of the individual artist or novelist. Only through a detailed probing of Robbe-Grillet's texts themselves, and their technique, can the critic be sure he is not producing generalizations or impressionistic metafictions that enable him to relate aspects of a novel to a visual artifact. The idea of the individual and primary relationship of the writer to his text, and by extension to his technique, is supported by Robbe-Grillet when he says:

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[2] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Fragment autobiographique," p. 4.

> [...] Je pense que le choix des générateurs . . . le choix d'un certain nombre de thèmes, révèle une constellation, et que cette constellation est analysable. Il faut seulement ne pas commettre l'erreur de penser que le premier analyste peut ne pas être l'écrivain lui-même. Le premier analyste est l'écrivain, et le deuxième est le lecteur.[4]

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[3] Wylie Sypher, "The Analogy of Forms in Art," Four Stages of Renaissance Style: Transformation in Art and Literature 1400-1700, Anchor Books (New York: Doubleday, 1955), p. 8.

[4] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Extrait d'un débat public avec Alain Robbe-Grillet: Université de Caen, 24 avril 1975," Le Parcours moebien de l'écriture: Le Voyeur d'Alain

The first analysis of the text of a novel is made by "l'écrivain," the second by the reader; the introduction of a third type of analysis, connecting the novel with a painting, poses the danger of straying too far from the original work. As a basis for just such a discussion of two art forms, a study of the unique visual techniques of Robbe-Grillet's fiction helps eliminate the danger of falling into such a "piège."

The first chapter indicates Robbe-Grillet's approach to literature and the visual, as it may be perceived in his essays and interviews, within the framework of Heidegger's concept of the subjectivity and objectivity of Sicht. Before analysing his fiction in the light of this metaphysic, a brief summary of his ideas on the visual, shaping them as a methodology, and focusing on this aspect of his literary style, is essential in order to justify and systematize a visual approach to his narrative technique (and to delineate a procedure able to maintain the logic and clarity of a textual analysis along these lines).

Robbe-Grillet's notion of the "fonction créatrice" of novelistic description, defined as a dual movement of creation and destruction, and suggesting an alternative to the pre-existing reality he believes is implied in the Balzacian style of description, is the infrastructure of his visual style; the passages which result from this "fonction"

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[4] (cont'd) Robbe-Grillet, Alain Goulet, Archives des lettres modernes, No. 37 (Paris: Lettres modernes, 1982), pp. 91-92.

provide the essential material which composes the fiction. Robbe-Grillet describes this literary activity in the following manner in "Temps et description dans le récit d'aujourd'hui:"

> . . . elle [literary activity] ne donne pas d'abord une vue d'ensemble, elle paraît naître d'un menu fragment sans importance - ce qui ressemble le plus à un point - à partir duquel elle invente des lignes, des plans, une architecture; et on a d'autant plus l'impression qu'elle les invente que soudain elle se contredit, se répète, se reprend, bifurque, etc. Pourtant, on commence à entrevoir quelque chose, et l'on croit que ce quelque chose va se préciser. Mais les lignes du dessin s'accumulent, se surchargent, se nient, se déplacent, si bien que l'image est mise en doute à mesure qu'elle se construit. Quelques paragraphes encore et, lorsque la description prend fin, on s'aperçoit qu'elle n'a rien laissé debout derrière elle: elle s'est accomplie dans un double mouvement de création et de gommage, que l'on retrouve d'ailleurs dans le livre à tous les niveaux et en particulier dans sa structure globale . . . (p. 127)

This statement makes it possible to dispense with one of the problems raised by Wylie Sypher in his discussion of the relationships between literature and the other arts. He suggests that form (the way an artist organizes his material) is non-metaphorical in painting, sculpture, and architecture, while in literature it is metaphorical; words are complex symbols for impressions and ideas, but form in the visual arts is a more direct means of expression.[5] Robbe-Grillet relinquishes the creative function to a text that derives from an autonomous fragment, evading the issue of the metaphor; the text, and the words it contains, he says, do not identify with an external world; they are self-referential. The ideas on fiction expressed by Robbe-Grillet indicate that form is directly related to the development and presentation of a novel, just as it is inseparable from the creation and presentation of a painting. In the colloque at Cerisy on the nouveau roman, Robbe-Grillet is more specific about the relationship between metaphor and form:

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[5] Sypher, p. 10.

> Dans les figures que j'avais condamnées, et pour lesquelles en effet on emploie généralement le terme de métaphore, il y a toujours renvoie à une essence profonde des choses, une sorte de sur-nature. Mes formes de huit, elles, ne font que renvoyer à d'autres formes de huit. Il n'y a pas métaphore au sens traditionnel . . . . Ce qui est important pour nous, c'est de rester dans le domaine des formes, sans qu'il y ait jamais rien derrière le texte.[4]

The construction and deconstruction of a description is not dependent upon metaphor as symbol, but upon metaphor as form.

As a visual style, the general, fundamental principle of "fonction créatrice" in form, is found in Robbe-Grillet's approach to point of view in fiction. He believes that viewpoint in the nouveau roman should imitate the implicitly self-conscious and exacting visibility produced by the camera angle in a film, creating a perspective controlled by what he terms simply "un oeil d'homme." The realization that the eye of man, of the observer, must fall from a specific angle, and a certain position, results from the notion of point of view. As this perspective indicates the existence of a myriad of alternative viewpoints, only one of which may be presented at a time, the author stresses the artificial framework of such visual depiction; one scene among many may be chosen arbitrarily. The building and rebuilding of a description is dependent on the movement of "l'oeil" to different places offering various angles of vision; on the basis of this principle the creation-destruction-creation can be repeated and reworked an almost infinite number of times. Perhaps this use of point of view may be understood, in orthodox terms of narrative theory, through an outline of Seymour Chatman's definition of the phrase. In his book Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, he distinguishes three usages of the term: literal, or through someone's eyes (perception), figurative, or through someone's world view (ideology, conceptual system, Weltanschauung), and transferred, or from someone's interest-vantage (characterizing his general interest, profit, etc.).[7] Chatman calls the first type perceptual point of view, the category which is most closely related to Robbe-Grillet's visual style, but which by no means encompasses it, for Chatman is concerned primarily with the character who directly perceives an object or an event. Robbe-Grillet, on the other hand, not only indicates that an object or event is seen, rather than conceptualized or evoked, he does so using a particular visual language which invokes the "language of painting": surface, shape, line, contour, volume, mass, pattern, and colour.[1]

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[4] Pierre and Madeleine Caminade, "Métaphor et nouveau roman: discussion," Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui, problèmes généraux, ed. Jean Ricardou, 10/18, No. 720 (Paris: Union Génerale d'éditions, 1972), i, 281-82.

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[7] Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 151-52.

Robbe-Grillet deals, in part, with the difficulty of a direct presentation of the visual, in verbal form, when he points out in "Une Voie pour le roman futur" the change in "le langage littéraire" which is taking place in the movement away from an analogical vocabulary to "l'adjectif optique, descriptif" (p. 23); here he assumes that the written word may approximate the visual if the adjective is employed in this manner. Out of context, such a notion places itself in danger of immediate objection, confronting accusations of pictorialism and word-painting, but in relation to the non-metaphorical structuring principle of "fonction créatrice," and to the philosophical concept of Sicht, where one may place Robbe-Grillet's notions about literature, such criticism can be credibly refuted. The concept of the visual object depends for its existence, in part, on his belief in the possibility of an eye which watches without indulgence, resting on the surface of things; "l'oeil de cet homme se pose sur les choses avec une insistence sans mollesse: il les voit, mais il refuse de se les approprier" ("Nature, humanisme, tragédie," p. 48). Such an eye is not suspicious of objects, does not connive with them, and refuses to appropriate them, instead it remains on the level of visual, nonanthropomorphic perception.

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[1] For a discussion and definition of the language of painting see Christopher Cornford, "The Language of Painting," Understanding Art: Themes, Techniques, and Methods, Vol. 1 of The Random House Library of Painting and Sculpture (New York: Random House, 1982), pp. 96-97.

While it is possible to briefly summarize the principles of Robbe-Grillet's visual technique in his ideas about literary language and form, the "fonction créatrice" of description, the use of metaphor as form, the use of "l'oeil d'homme" as point of view, and the preference for the visual object, it should also be determined whether he proposes how to go about developing this style on a pragmatic level, and whether he shows what purpose it could serve. Central to Robbe-Grillet's notions about visual technique is the insistence on the importance of an awareness of the proximity or distance of an object which is under observation. When he remarks in "Nature, humanisme, tragédie" that sight "se posant à l'improviste sur un détail . . . l'isole, l'extrait, voudrait l'emporter en avant, constate son échec, s'acharne, ne réussit plus ni à l'enlever tout à fait ni à le remettre en place" (p. 65), he is speaking of visual point of view, or perspective, as a relative matter; to the naked eye, if the object is remote it may appear one way, but a close look may completely alter its perceived form. Sight functions in the novel, according to Robbe-Grillet, to "mesurer les distances" (p. 67), but the result is always incomplete apprehension, for a close view is too fragmented and a distant view is too general to be undistorted. Another form of visual distortion is exemplified (by the description of the scene in the penholder) in Raymond Roussel's poem "La Vue," that

Robbe-Grillet comments on in his essay "Énigmes et transparence chez Raymond Roussel":

> Bien entendu, la précision des détails y est aussi poussée que si l'auteur nous montrait une scène véritable, grandeur nature, ou même agrandie à l'aide d'un appareil d'optique, jumelles ou microscope. Une image de quelques millimètres de côté nous fait ainsi voir une plage comportant divers personnages sur le sable, ou sur l'eau dans des embarcations; il n'y a jamais rien de flou dans leurs gestes, ou dans les lignes du décor. De l'autre côté de la baie passe une route; et sur cette route roule une voiture, et un homme est assis à l'intérieur de la voiture; cet homme tient une canne, dont le pommeau représente . . ., etc.’

Because the setting is reproduced in a visual artifact, Robbe-Grillet is in effect delineating here a second level of distortion, not that caused by the naked eye, but that which is created by the representation of reality. The miniaturized setting enlarges certain details which, viewed with the naked eye, would appear with less clarity due to their relative position in the setting. Thus when Robbe-Grillet says that Roussel "nous propose . . . une relation concernant un double" (p. 75), placing an intermediary artist between himself and the world of men, it is a visual artifact, and not some other object, which creates this relationship.

In Roussel's texts the manipulation of detail in a description of an object or setting, in order to obtain an opacity that is without transparency, is also a function of the visual, Robbe-Grillet compares the description in

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’ Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Énigmes et transparence chez Raymond Roussel," Pour un noveau roman, p. 76. All further references are to this edition of the essay and appear in the text.

Roussel's work to "une peinture en trompe-l'oeil" (p. 71), although detail is not employed in the same way as it is in "La Vue." Instead of using a technique which miniaturizes, distances, and then enlarges artificially, Roussel creates an over-accumulation of detail where objects seem like the trompe-l'oeil depiction on a painted, theatrical backdrop. Unrealistically complete, they are part of a false front with nothing to fill in the setting that one would expect to be behind them, but they also lack mystery -- everything which can be known about them is known. Roussel's verbal construction attains, therefore, the same effect as a trompe-l'oeil painting.

According to Robbe-Grillet's notions about literature and the visual, the manner in which detail is used also helps to develop the effect of precision in description. As he explains in the essay "Temps et description," "Le souci de précision qui confine parfois au délire" (p. 127), accumulates detail with a goal different from that which results in Roussel's use of trompe-l'oeil. The agglomeration of directions to left or right, of calculations, measurements, and geometric points of reference, ultimately arrives at a sense of confusion, disorder, and hallucination. Somewhat unexpectedly, precise detail is not a prerequisite of absolute, objective certainty, but rather a source of obscurity and ambiquity. This disarray amidst precision is consistent with other visual techniques that use detail only to arrive at uncertainty in the midst of what appears to be an overabundance of fact. Relative proximity to an object provides the detailed but limited apprehension of a close-up, allowing for no absolute delineation of the object. In the case of a visual artifact, the landscape reproduced in the penholder distances and advances objects in a setting without consideration for the "reality" that is the accepted artistic norm of three-dimensional perspective. Without the illusion of such rational space, the setting appears in an unfamiliar and seemingly ambiguous form. Also partaking of an equivocal illusionism are the opaque objects in trompe-l'oeil which have lost their mystery, but are excluded from a three-dimensional version of reality.

Robbe-Grillet believes that other techniques of visual style contribute to confusion or uncertainty; colour, when used in the depiction of an object, is uncertain because its effect is dependent on the quality of light and the background, just as it is in a painting, one might add. A form or an outline, on the other hand, "sera généralement plus sûre qu'une couleur" ("Nature, humanisme, tragédie," p. 59). But in spite of the ambiguity inherent in even such a direct appropriation of the visual in literature as the use of colour and outline, an appeal to the visual senses is in the forefront of literary defenses against a false humanism and the Cartesian break between subjectivity and objectivity. Robbe-Grillet quotes Roquentin, the hero of Sartre's La Nausée, "la vue, c'est une invention abstraite, une idée nettoyée, simplifiée, une idée d'homme," but for the nouveau romancier "elle demeure néamoins, entre le monde et moi, l'opération la plus efficace" (p. 66); the sense of sight is the best manner in which one may determine one's situation in the world, and, by extension, the most effective means of conveying it in literary form.

The optical sense is ambiguous, but not as uncertain as the sense of touch or smell. The only visual technique mentioned by Robbe-Grillet which verges on reliability is that of the frozen gesture or the instantaneous image. As we have already noted, he finds "instantanéité" characteristic of Roussel's descriptions, especially in such images as:

> La vague qui s'apprête à déferler, l'enfant qui joue au cerceau sur la plage, ailleurs la statue d'un personnage en train d'accomplir un geste éloquent (même si le sens en est d'abord absent, à l'état de rébus), ou l'objet figuré à mi-chemin du sol et de la main qui vient de le lâcher . . . . (p. 76)

Representation in this mode leaves the reader in suspense, according to Robbe-Grillet, unable to arrive at a definitive meaning or conclusion. The precise detail which is characteristic of the instantaneous image also plays a role in creating a feeling of certitude through its negation of the passage of time. Precision:

> . . . ne parvient pas à empêcher le monde d'être mouvant jusque dans ses aspects les plus matériels, et même au sein de son apparente immobilité. Il ne s'agit plus ici de temps qui coule, puisque paradoxalement les gestes ne sont au contraire donnés que figés dans l'instant. C'est la matière elle-même qui est à la fois solide et instable . . . . ("Temps et description," p. 127)

Stopping temporal movement provides a level of certitude nonetheless, fleeting in its authenticity, but briefly infallible. The instability of matter, or in the Roussel images, of the object in relation to gravity, eventually retrieves the ambiguity, but the short-lived achievement of surety should be noted, for not only does Robbe-Grillet perceive this technique in Roussel's texts, he also makes use of it in his own fiction, as we shall see. The sense of ambiguity returns, however, when the instantaneous image or frozen gesture in a text is compared with the photographic or cinematographic image. The subjectivity of the camera's perspective, as it chooses and isolates a certain image of an object, means that one is also aware that it is unstable, capable of repeating the process at any time, although the cinematographic "cut" is a less ephemeral presentation of a likeness.

In spite of the ambiguity which Robbe-Grillet finds in visual technique -- in its dependence upon the relative proximity or distance of an object, in its use of detail, enlargement, or miniaturization, and the transparency - opacity of trompe-l'oeil, in its delirious precision, uncertain and emotive colour, definitive outline, instantaneous gesture and frozen image -- it is part of the definitive departure from realistic, logical, and temporal narrative where visual description consists largely of word-painting, subordinate to the verbal structure. The characteristic of the frozen image as both immutable and mutable, the coexistence within its structure of stability and fluctuation, parallels the structure of a text with a "fonction créatrice," the dual movement of construction and "gommage." In such a text, which clarifies and then blurs the contours of the settings, objects, and people described, the instantaneous image also provides a moment of clarity before collapsing in upon itself, in both instances the imposition of a definitive meaning is avoided. In particular, the frozen image aids in releasing the visual from pictorialism so that it may help build the fictional structure on a less referential basis. When the frozen image depicts a visual artifact, such as a drawing, statue, engraving, or painting, a twofold possibility for descriptive construction and "gommage" develops: the movement in the depiction of the artifact itself, in the text, and the development of the image which the artifact represents.

The place in which Robbe-Grillet most clearly explains the concept behind his use of such ambiguous techniques, as well as the purpose of construction and destruction in description, is the 1974 introduction to his ciné-roman Glissements progressifs du plaisir:

> . . . l'acception du mot structure s'oppose radicalement à celle mise à la mode par Lévi-Strauss: pour lui, la structure, c'est toujours du sens; c'est même à la fois le premier sens et le sens dernier, c'est le sens profond, c'est la parole de Dieu. Pour nous, au contraire, toute structure serait plutôt constituée par du non-sens, le sens (anecdotique ou profond, cela revient au même) ne pouvant qu'anéantir, en la digérant, sa propre organisation structurelle. Effraction dans la continuité d'un sens, infraction, réfraction, diffraction, rupture, organisation sérielle ou

> combinatoire défiant tout sens global qui chercherait à la récupérer, la structure - pour nous - ne peut devenir que passagèrement le lieu d'un sens précaire, glissant, toujours prêt à s'effondrer.[10]

"Non-sens," "effraction," and "rupture" annihilate the possibility of recuperating traditional, referential meaning, Robbe-Grillet's ideas about the visual apply not only to an understanding of form, however, but also to the meaning implicit in the form itself. The slippage, and the central uncertainty or ambiguity, central to his notions about visual technique relate, through the Heideggerian notion of Sicht, to the Nichts which is the basis of man's Dasein. William Barrett explains Heidegger's idea of Nichts in the following manner:

> The essential finitude of man . . . is experienced not at his boundaries, but, so to speak, at the very centre of his Being . . . . Anxiety is not fear, being afraid of this or that definite object, but the uncanny feeling of being afraid of nothing at all. It is precisely Nothingness that makes itself present and felt as the object of our dread.[11]

It is possible that the ambiguity, the sense of being unable to grasp anything solid, in Robbe-Grillet's visual technique is a way of conveying the fear of nothingness which is at the core of man's being. Not even sight, the sense which Robbe-Grillet believes best serves to define man's situation, can escape the principle of Nichts. Each time the eye lights on something and seems to grasp it with lucidity, it slips away when faced with this Nichts. While sight is more reliable than the other senses, it inevitably betrays man.

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[10] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Introduction," Glissements progressifs de plaisir (Paris: Édition de Minuit, 1974), pp. 12-13.

[11] Barrett, p. 226.

Some critics have remarked upon the importance of Robbe-Grillet's methods of description in his novels. Gérard Genette notes in his 1962 essay "Vertige fixé" such techniques as transformation and "glissements" in Dans le labyrinthe:

> L'intérêt du roman tient ou [sic] entier dans la manière à la fois subtile et rigoureuse dont ces éléments se combinent et se transforment sous nos yeux. Entre l'exposé du thème et la reprise finale en diminuendo, un travail insensible et continu de variations, de multiplications, de fusions, de renversements, de substitutions, de métamorphoses et d'anamorphoses s'est opéré dans les personnages, les lieux, les objets, les situations, les actes et les paroles. Le soldat, le gamin, la jeune femme, se sont tour à tour dédoublés et confondus, les maisons et les rues se sont télescopées, un tableau s'est animé en scène, des scènes se sont figées en tableau, des conversations se sont ébauchées, répétées, déformées, dissoutes, des gestes se sont développés et évanouis, des objets ont changé de main, de lieu, de temps, de forme, de matière, le monde du réel et celui du possible ont échangé leurs attributs, une ville entière et un moment de l'histoire ont glissé de l'un à l'autre et vice versa dans une imperceptible translation. Les dernières pages nous ramènent à la situation initiale, dans le calme et le silence où naissent et s'achèvent ce que Borges appelle "les secrètes aventures de l'ordre": rien n'a bougé, tout est en place, et pourtant, quel vertige![12]

William F. Van Wert's 1982 article "Intertextuality and Redundant Coherence in Robbe-Grillet" deals with the significance of the element of repetition in such transformations, although other critics give attention to

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[12] Gérard Genette, "Vertige fixé," Figures (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), pp. 69-90; rpt. Obliques: Robbe-Grillet, No. 16-17, 105-06.

Robbe-Grillet's descriptions while ignoring the techniques germane to them.[13] Bruce Morrissette dwells on Robbe-Grillet's "descriptive style" in terms of what objects the author depicts and the geometric or scientific inspiration of the style, even noting the evolution in the use of the "frozen scenes" in Les Gommes and Le Voyeur in the 1975 edition of his book, which is a landmark in Robbe-Grillet studies.[14] In her 1981 doctoral dissertation on the French author's concept and practice of description Marjorie Hellerstein looks at image, metamorphosis, and shifting points of view in Les Gommes.[15] But none of these exegeses examines the distinctive visual structure or style of Robbe-Grillet's descriptions, restricting the analyses to the usages of the traditional, verbal narrative, which does not have an independent, creative function, and where the "visual" point of view cannot be delineated or clarified.

It seems essential, nonetheless, given Robbe-Grillet's ideas about the role of the visual in fiction, and the fact that he expounds a method of visual technique and description, that his novels be examined in the light of these concepts. Not only is it important to determine the use to which visual style is put, but also to learn the meaning behind it. Such an investigation is also an essential basis for the study of the relationship between his novels and contemporary painting; without an understanding of their visual technique and structure and its concurrent meaning, a comparison of his fiction with certain modern paintings would remain thematic, concerned purely with iconological and iconographical similarities or analogies. This approach would be inappropriate to the literature in question, where the "fonction créatrice" that generates a novel subsumes content to form.

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[13] William F. Van Wert, "Intertextuality and Redundant Coherence in Robbe-Grillet," Romanic Review, 73, No. 2 (March 1982), 249-57.

[14] Bruce Morrissette, The Novel of Robbe-Grillet (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 96-100.

[15] Marjorie Hope Hellerstein, "Idea into Art: Alain Robbe-Grillet's Concept of Description as Practiced in His Novels and His Films," Diss. New York University, 1981.

Robbe-Grillet's use of visual techniques in his novels from Un Régicide to Project pour une révolution à New York is meticulous and deliberate; any one of these books would easily lend itself to a detailed analysis of this style: aspects of visual viewpoint and the effect of distance and proximity, the use of the visual adjective, the function of precision, the relative merits of colour and form, the appearance of the frozen impact and the visual artifact, and, finally, the meaning of ambiguity and its relationship to Nichts. Unfortunately, the scope of this study does not allow for such a close reading of each work of fiction. In any case, the vital importance of Robbe-Grillet's visual style is most readily apparent in a discussion that focuses on the various visual techniques, rather than on their place in a particular novel, which would be a misleading isolation of some methods and settings, used repeatedly in different books. The early period of Robbe-Grillet's writing in question here, is characterized by intertextuality, defined by Bruce Morrissette as "reinserting into a text objects and other elements, either from another portion of the work or from an earlier work, that are reincorporated in new verbal structures."[16] Robbe-Grillet's visual style employs a strategy of reiteration, as often one of technique, as of motif. However, the visual is a structure in itself, and to develop a sense of its function, not just as a connecting element, but as one of the building blocks of his fiction, it is more useful to obtain an overview of these techniques, than to merely place them in the context of individual novels. While it is possible here to provide only a brief summary of the most significant visual techniques, leaving aside some which are both interesting and original, it is hoped that a study of such highlights will be helpful in discerning the full ramifications of Robbe-Grillet's visual style.

His earliest novel, Un Régicide, written in 1949 but first published in 1978 (with revisions to the first few pages made in 1957), retains a lyrical, humanistic quality in some of its descriptive details.[17] In such phrases as "il fait beau, le vent nous apporte au visage un air déjà tiède et sucré" (p. 136), and "le sable dur, parsemé de coquillages bâillant à l'air leur langue rose . . . " (p.

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[16] Bruce Morrissette, Intertextual Assemblage, p. 9.

[17] Alain Robbe-Grillet, Un Régicide (Paris: Édition de Minuit, 1978). All further references are to this edition of the novel and appear in the text.

139), he describes the atmosphere, the air of an island, as imbued with humanistic qualities, in a metaphorical manner. The same style is apparent in the following passage about one of the sirens who pays yearly visits to the men isolated on the island:

> Je prends sa longue main, sa main de joueuse de harpe; je compte un à un ses doigts déliés. Elle a la peau si douce et polie par les vagues que l'on frissonne en la touchant. Elle a la main blanche et les doigts si fins que la bague que j'ai trouvée passe sans peine à l'annuaire. (p. 144)

Carolyn A. Durham, in her article on this novel, believes that "the greatest originality of *Un Régicide* [is] the figurative use of language. In contrast to the geometrical precision and the neutral objectivity of the descriptive passages of the later novels, *Un Régicide* is filled with lyrical prose and extensive imagery."[18] She gives further examples in *Un Régicide* of brief phrases imbued with metaphorical *humanisme*, but her generalization about the neutral objectivity of description in his other novels is incorrect, most particularly in the case of *Les Gommes*. One example of a somewhat traditional, realistic description in this novel, carefully places a city street in its location, and according to the class it represents:

> La rue des Arpenteurs est une longue rue droite, bordée de maisons déjà anciennes, de deux ou trois étages, dont les façades insuffisamment entretenues laissent deviner la modeste condition des locataires qu'elles abritent: ouvriers, petits employés, ou simples marins pêcheurs. Les boutiques n'y sont pas

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[18] Carolyn A. Durham, "In Search of a New Novel: Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Un Régicide*," *French Forum*, 7, No. 2 (May 1982), 153. pp. 8-9. All further references are to this edition of the novel and appear in the text.

> très reluisantes et les cafés eux-mêmes sont peu nombreux, non que ces gens-là soient particulièrement sobres mais plutôt parce qu'ils préfèrent aller boire ailleurs.
>
> Le Café des Alliés (débit de boissons et chambres meublées) est situé tout au début de la rue, au numéro 10, à quelques maisons seulement du Boulevard Circulaire et de la ville proprement dite, si bien que dans ses parages le caractère prolétarien des édifices se trouve plus ou moins hybridé de bourgeoisie. A l'angle du boulevard se dresse un grand immeuble en pierre, de très bonne mine, et en face, au numèro 2 de la rue, une sorte de petit hôtel particulier d'un seul étage qu'entoure une étroite bande de jardin. Le pavillon n'a pas beaucoup de style mais donne une impression d'aisance, d'un certain luxe même; une grille doublée d'une haie de fusain taillée à hauteur d'homme achève son isolement.
>
> Vers l'est, la rue des Arpenteurs s'allonge, interminable et de moins en moins avenante, jusqu'à des quartiers tout à fait excentriques, franchement misérables: quadrillage de chemins boueux entre les baraques, tôle rouillée, vieilles planches et papier goudronné.
>
> A l'ouest, au delà du boulevard Circulaire et de son canal, s'étend la ville, les rues un peu étriquées entre de hautes maisons de brique, les édifices publics sans décorations inutiles, les églises figées, les vitrines sans fantaisie. L'ensemble est solide, cossu parfois, mais austère; les cafés ferment tôt, les fenêtres sont étroites, les gens sont sérieux.''

The depiction of the street and the area, and the class of its inhabitants, are conveyed a little more compactly and precisely than they would be in a novel by Balzac, but they are hardly delineated in a neutral and objective fashion.

The same method of description is apparent in the information given about another street, this time one with office buildings, rather than residences:

> De chaque côté s'alignent des maisons de brique apparente, toutes pareillement simplifiées, sans

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'' Alain Robbe-Grillet, Les Gommes (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1953), pp. 8-9. All further references are to this edition of the novel and appear in the text.

> balcons ni corniches ni décorations d'aucune sorte. Il n'y a ici que le plus strict nécessaire: des murs unis percés d'ouvertures rectangulaires; cela ne sent pas la pauvreté, seulement le travail et l'économie. Ce sont d'ailleurs, pour la plus grande partie, des immeubles commerciaux.
>
> Façades sévères, assemblage soigneux de petites briques rouge sombre, solides, monotones, patientes: un sou de bénéfice réalisé par la "Compagnie des Bois Résineux", un sou gagné par "Louis Schwob, Exportateur en Bois", par "Mark et Lengler" ou par la société anonyme "Borex". Exportation de bois, bois résineux, bois d'industrie, bois d'exportation, exportation de bois résineux, le quartier est entièrement consacré à ce trafic; des milliers d'hectares de forêts de sapins entassés brique à brique, pour mettre à l'abri les gros livres de comptes. Toutes les maisons sont construites sur le même modèle: cinq marches conduisent à une porte vernie, en renfoncement, encadrée de plaques noires portant en lettres d'or la raison sociale de la firme; deux fenêtres à gauche, une à droite, et au-dessus quatre étages de fenêtres semblables. Peut-être y a-t-il des appartements au milieu des bureaux? Ils ne s'en distinguent en tout cas par aucun signe extérieur. (pp. 37-38)

There is, of course, a slight twist in the apparently Balzacian style of description; in both the examples cited Robbe-Grillet describes what he calls "façades" of buildings, a term with two implications: either, most simply, the visible exterior of the houses, or the props of a theatre set, backdrops which suggest hidden furnishings that actually do not exist. Carolyn Durham's comments notwithstanding, the depiction of a street and its houses in Un Régicide is more literal than figurative:

> Il était presque arrivé; le tramway longeait une série de hautes maisons aux fenêtres étroites, dont les façades plates ne se distinguaient les unes des autres que par la nuance, plus ou moins verdâtre, de l'enduit qui les recouvrait. Juste après le tournant apparaissait la grande porte de l'Usine Générale interrompant le mur d'enceinte en mâchefer, devant lequel se trouvait l'arrêt, une cinquantaine de mètres plus loin. (p. 43)

In this example the literal nature of the description is the result of a precise indication of position and distance, and, in general, such precision without humanistic complicity is more common in Un Régicide than in Les Gommes, in spite of some lyrical passages in parts of the former novel. This is consistent with Robbe-Grillet's statement in the introduction to Un Régicide that the novel, in comparison with Les Gommes is a "livre plus difficile d'accès" (p. 7); in Les Gommes interpretive clues are provided for the reader.

The lyrical and the Balzacian styles of description apparent in the first two works, begins to weaken in Le Voyeur and succeeding novels. To grasp the changing technique, one may compare the description of the street and buildings in Les Gommes, to that of a similar setting in Dans le labyrinthe:

> Dehors, le ciel est toujours de la même blancheur sans éclat. Il fait jour encore. La rue est déserte: ni voitures sur la chaussée, ni piétons sur les trottoirs. Il a neigé; et la neige n'a pas encore fondu. Elle forme une couche assez peu épaisse - quelques centimètres - mais parfaitement régulière, qui recouvre toutes les surfaces horizontales de la même couleur blanche, terne et neutre. Les seules traces qui s'y remarquent sont les sentiers rectilignes, parallèles aux files d'immeubles et aux caniveaux encore bien visibles (rendus même plus nets par leur bordure verticale restée noire), et séparant les trottoirs en deux bandes inégales dans toute leur longueur. Au carrefour, au pied d'un réverbère, un petit rond de neige piétinée présente la même teinte jaunâtre que les étroits sentiers qui longent les maisons. Les portes sont closes. Les fenêtres sont vacantes de toute silhouette, collée aux carreaux ou même estompée à l'arrière-plan, dans les profondeurs des chambres. La platitude de tout ce décor ferait croire, d'ailleurs, qu'il n'y a rien derrière ces carreaux, derrière ces portes, derrière

> ces façades. Et toute la scène demeure vide: sans un homme, ni une femme, ni même un enfant.[20]

Unlike the setting in Dans le labyrinthe, the rue des Arpenteurs is definitely peopled, not so much in the sense that characters actually appear in the scene, but that it is humanized with the trappings of a class society. The east end of the street is typically modest and proletarian, the west end is petit bourgeois, "solide," but "austère," and "les gens sont sérieux." On the other hand, the street in Dans le labyrinthe defies categorization according to class; the description is stripped of humanistic complicity and thus the setting is empty not only of people, but also of a place within a social system. In this passage the technique extends and develops that used in the image of the street and factory in Un Régicide. The scene in the early novel is delineated in lines, planes, distances and colours: the lines of the street and the windows, the planes of the house and factory wall, the distances between streetcorner, factory door, and tramcar stop, and the green coating on the front of the houses. The setting in the rue des Arpenteurs is, in contrast, not sketched, but told; the reader is not expected to see the shape of the houses, but rather to accept that they are "modeste," that the stores "n'y sont pas très reluisantes," and that the eastside is "misérable." In the second quotation from Les Gommes the buildings are described as "commerciaux," but the "murs percés d'ouvertures rectangulaires" are "drawn."

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[20] Alain Robbe-Grillet, Dans le labyrinthe (Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1959), pp. 23-24. All further references are to this edition of the novel and appear in the text.

The setting from Dans le labyrinthe, like the one from Un Régicide, is an ensemble of line, plane, and colour, although the complexity of the composition is greater in the later novel. The depiction of the street scene consists of : the horizontal planes of the street, the paths, and the crossroads, the vertical planes of the housefronts and curbs, the circle of trampled snow, and the white lighting "sans éclat" or "terne et neutre" that undoubtedly influences the colour value, or degree of luminosity, of the trampled snow which is "jaunâtre," not simply "jaune." Although Robbe-Grillet does not indicate a picture plane through the use of perspective, as well, the setting is delineated with a strong appeal to the visual sense, an indication that the author is turning away from Balzacian style realism and the "written" settings, comprehensible because of their implicit relationship to the nineteenth century class structure. While it is only hinted at in Les Gommes that the houses are merely facades, the illusion of realism crumbles altogether in Dans le labyrinthe; "La platitude de tout ce décor ferait croire, d'ailleurs, qu'il n'y a rien derrière ces carreaux, derrière ces portes, derrière ces façades."

In Projet pour une révolution à New York the notion of a house as an empty facade is carried even further than in Dans le labyrinthe. The housefront which is mentioned frequently throughout Projet makes a final appearance as a poster:

> L'affiche qui fait suite est également une très bonne reproduction photographique en couleurs. Le sujet lui-même est cette fois de champ si étendu que la grandeur naturelle a suffi : il s'agit de la façade de ma propre maison. Je la reconnais aussitôt aux trois marches de fausse pierre, dont la plus haute est écornée dans le coin droit, et au dessin de la grille en ferronnerie qui protège le petit rectangle vitré.[21]

The facade is not only a false front replacing a three-dimensional object, it also indicates two levels of the visual artifact; it is a colour photograph used to make a poster, a reproduction of a reproduction. The method of pictorial composition found in Dans le labyrinthe takes another step, this time into the realm of the visual object. In the quotation from Projet, detail, rather than plane, line, or colour, delineates the visual composition, but the facade proves to be illusion upon illusion. The housefront is not only a poster, it is a poster glued to a wall; "Le battant s'ouvre et j'ai juste à me courber un peu pour franchir le mur" (p. 175). Then a problem occurs to the narrator: "comment le passage des trois marches s'est-il effectué? Je ne peux les avoir gravies, puisqu'elles sont en trompe-l'oeil. Et pourtant je n'ai pas le souvenir d'avoir eu à enjamber un seuil d'une telle hauter . . . " (p. 175). The problem, created by illusion, is self-contradictory and impossible to resolve: if the steps are only "trompe-l'oeil" they cannot be climbed, but, likewise, one does not need to step over a threshold, one merely steps through a wall. In the multiple aspects of illusion which develop from the housefront in Projet, there is an extensive development of the questioning of the class defined façades found in Les Gommes. In Projet, bourgeois reality is no longer tested; instead the various levels of illusion constituted by reality per se of contemporary society, which can only be re-presented in the form of a visual construction, never presented, are retrieved from the obscurity of accepted, conventional, verbal and visual discourse.

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[21] Alain Robbe-Grillet, Projet pour une révolution à New York (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1970), p. 174. All further references are to this edition of the novel and appear in the text.

In the early novels Robbe-Grillet introduces visual, descriptive techniques which recur and evolve consistently throughout his fiction up to the publication of Projet in 1970. For instance, visual perception is often depicted as taking place through a type of glass pane, sometimes integrated into a visual instrument. In Un Régicide Boris enters the factory:

> En suivant la galerie, qui dominait les machines de la hauteur d'un étage, il aperçut les huit rangées de tours et de fraiseuses et les ouvriers au travail, le visage déjà taché de graisse. La cloison vitrée assourdissait à peine la trépidation des moteurs et le grincement des outils, mais suffisait à créer cette impression d'irréalité, ou d'éloignement infini, que donne aux images une lorgnette retournée. (pp. 43-44)

Many aspects of visual perception are presented in this single passage. The grey faces of the workers suggest the lack of clarity, or blurring and distortion, that takes place when they are discerned from the optical standpoint of the naked eye. The glass partition, supposedly serving as a barrier to noise, actually functions visually, as a lens, Robbe-Grillet providing the metaphor of a pair of opera glasses reversed in front of the eyes. The setting thus seems to be miniaturized, and viewed from a great distance, creating an "impression d'irréalité" similar to that produced by the view in the penholder described by Roussel. When Robbe-Grillet describes such a visual perspective in Les Gommes, he remains true to his suggestion that the second novel is more accessible, using a straightforward simile. Wallas verifies the view from a window in a room where a woman may have witnessed an incident related to a crime:

> Il reconstitue maintenant l'image qui, à l'endroit et de si près, ne lui semblait plus la même. Il soulève le tissu pour mieux voir.
>
> Sous cet angle nouveau le pavillon lui apparaît, au milieu de son jardin méticuleux, comme isolé par l'objectif d'un instrument d'optique. Son regard plonge vers les hautes cheminées, la toiture en ardoise - qui, dans cette région, donne une note de préciosité - la façade de brique coquettement encadrée par des chaînes d'encoignure en pierre de taille, que rappellent, au-dessus des fenêtres, des linteaux en saillie, l'arc de la porte et les quatre marches du perron. D'en bas l'on ne peut apprécier si pleinement l'harmonie des proportions, la rigueur - la nécessité, dirait-on - de l'ensemble (pp. 103-04)

The type of vision detailed here pertains to the angle of perception, rather than to the direct intervention and distortion of a glass barrier, but the object that is framed and isolated seems to be focused as if through the lens of a camera. The gaze of Wallas, a simile for the camera lens, drifts from the house to the level of the roof, presenting another frame, and another, particular visual structure. The framing power of the lens constructs "l'harmonie des proportions, la rigueur . . . de l'ensemble." The notion of the use of a photographic perspective is further supported by the fact that much later in the novel Garinati finds a photograph of a brick house, which he at first mistakes for the real object:

> Au bout de quelques pas il aperçoit, en levant la tête vers une boutique étincelante, le pavillon de brique qui fait le coin de la rue des Arpenteurs. Ce n'est pas la maison elle-même, mais une immense photographie habilement disposée derrière la vitre. (p. 211)

Robbe-Grillet moves from the formalization of a real setting or object by a framing device, to the idea that the form rendered by a photographic reproduction may be mistaken for reality, exploiting a range of modes of visual perception which casts doubt on, rather than delineating definitively, the object in question.

The lens is not only manipulated to indicate a certain visual perspective, however, it is also used to call attention to the role played by light in optical sensation. The new lens in the lighthouse is discussed in Le Voyeur:

> Il s'étendit longuement sur le nouveau système de lentilles dont le phare était muni depuis l'automne, d'une puissance optique encore jamais atteinte, capable de percer les brumes les plus épaisses. Il entreprit d'en expliquer le fonctionnement; mais sa description des appareils, en dépit d'une certaine allure technique, fut dès le début si obscure que le voyageur ne chercha même pas à comprendre la suite . . . .
>
> "Ça éclaire la falaise comme en plein jour", déclara le pêcheur pour conclure.
>
> C'était faux, évidemment: le pinceau lumineux des phares n'éclaire pas la côte à leur pied. Erreur étonnante de la part d'un prétendu marin, celui-ci avait pourtant l'air de croire que tel était leur

> rôle, afin sans doute de montrer aux navigateurs le détail des roches à éviter. Il n'avait jamais dû se servir de sa barque pendant la nuit.[22]

The simile of the lens used in Les Gommes indicates that perception is dependent upon point of view; Robbe-Grillet develops the fisherman's discussion of the lighthouse lens, and the beam it casts, as a statement about one of the most important factors in optical sensation, light. The fisherman's erroneous belief that light can elucidate details of the rocky coastline is a reminder that visual perception is a mixture of memory and immediate sensation.[23] But it also reinforces the motion, indicated in Un Régicide, that optical apprehension by the naked eye is a form of distortion. A particular ray of light illuminates just one part of an object, the rest remaining hidden and unknown; the eye sees only part of a truth, the balance being hidden in "les brumes les plus épaisses." In other words, truth may be plural rather than singular, full of ambiguous subjectivities rather than defined by a perfect objectivity. The description of the lens, and the rays of light it casts, in Le Voyeur supports the idea suggested by Robbe-Grillet in "Nature, humanisme, tragédie" that light is one of the most uncertain aspects of visual apprehension (p. 59).

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[22] Alain Robbe-Grillet, Le Voyeur (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1955), pp. 139-40. All further references are to this edition of the novel and appear in the text.

[23] See E.H. Gombrich, Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation, Bollingen Series XXXV, 5, 3rd ed. (1960; rpt. Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 146-47, 189.

The early stage of Robbe-Grillet's use of optical instruments in his fiction is represented by the glass partition in Un Régicide, the photographic type lens in Les Gommes and the lighthouse lens in Le Voyeur; they are accoutrements of the story (however uncertain, fragmented, or non-sequential the plot may be). The simile or metaphor for visual perception in these descriptions arises from the surface structure of the narrative; not from the deep structure which creates the text. In other words, in the early novels Robbe-Grillet "explains" to the reader the ramifications of a visual perspective. The technique, using the lens to create an optical impact, in these early works of fiction may perhaps be more clearly understood when contrasted with its use in La Jalousie. In this novel the dining-room window-pane acts as the lens, and is referred to repeatedly throughout the novel, unlike Un Régicide, Les Gommes, and Le Voyeur, where the lens is not developed extensively as either motif or structure. In La Jalousie the window-pane at first seems to act like the glass in Un Régicide, as a divider, and a stratagem for framing, as in Les Gommes:

> Les fenêtres sont closes. Aucun bruit ne pénètre à l'intérieur quand une silhouette passe au dehors devant l'une d'elles, longeant la maison à partir des cuisines et se dirigeant du côté des hangars. C'était, coupé à mi-cuisses, un noir en short . . . .[24]

The window serves to shut out sound and to frame a partial vision of the man who walks past. But when the man returns, two pages later, the description refers not simply to "les fenêtres," but more specifically to "les carreaux" or the panes; "En sens inverse, derrière les carreaux, repasse le chapeau de feutre" (p. 55). Three sentences later, the description becomes even more detailed:

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[24] Alain Robbe-Grillet, La Jalousie (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1957), p. 53. All further references are to this edition of the novel and appear in the text.

> Au delà du verre grossier, d'une propreté parfaite, il n'y a plus que la cour caillouteuse, puis, montant vers la route et le bord du plateau, la masse verte des bananiers. Dans leur feuillage sans nuance les défauts de la vitre dessinent des cercles mouvants. (p. 55)

There is more than just implication here that the glass functions as a lens; because it is flawed it actually intervenes in the image of the banana plantation, creating its structure. After this passage, whenever the dining-room window-pane is mentioned, the deformation in the glass plays a part in forming the setting depicted, the window also continuing to act as a framing device. The most detailed description of the window-pane itself comes later in the novel; the pane is part of a corner window which opens outward, each leaf having "une partie vitrée comprenant trois carreaux" (p. 73). No other information about this "lens" is added in other passages.

Instead, detail accumulates about the vacillating viewpoint on the courtyard and plantation setting, only to break down completely in the last two passages which mention the window-pane. At first, the visual focus through the panes moves from the plantation to the closer scene in the courtyard, where the arrival of A... and Franck in a blue car takes place. In relation to previous description, an element of ambiguity is introduced:

> Entre les deux battants, comme à travers celui de droite qui est à demi poussé, s'encadre, divisée en deux par le montant vertical, la partie gauche de la cour où la camionnette bâchée stationne, son capot tourné vers le secteur nord de la bananeraie. Il y a sous la bâche une caisse en bois blanc, neuve, marquée de grosses lettres noires, à l'envers, peintes au pochoir.
>
> Dans le battant gauche, le paysage réfléchi est plus brillant quoique plus sombre. Mais il est distordu par les défauts du verre, des taches de verdure circulaires ou en forme de croissants, de la teinte des bananiers, se promenant au milieu de la cour devant les hangars. (p. 57)

In the earlier passage about the window-pane, the flaw in the glass produces circles in the foliage on the plateau. There is some difference in this section: the distorted trees are seen in the courtyard, and detail is added in the form of the truck. The next time the pane is mentioned the position of the window is described in detail in order to delineate the fragmented reflection which appears in each window leaf:

> Dans l'une comme dans les autres s'encadrent des fragments du même paysage : la cour caillouteuse et la masse verte des bananiers.
>
> Les vitres sont d'une propreté parfaite et, dans le panneau de droite, la disposition des lignes n'est qu'à peine altérée par les défauts du verre, qui donnent simplement quelques nuances mouvantes aux surfaces trop uniformes. Mais dans le panneau de gauche, plus sombre quoique plus brillant, l'image réfléchie est franchement distordue, des taches de verdure circulaires ou en forme de croissants, de la couleur des bananiers, se promenant au milieu de la cour devant les hangars. (pp. 73-74)

The shift in viewpoint from the actual, exterior landscape to its reflection in the glass, is a movement which also indicates a growing subjectivity and ambiguity in the visual image, a sense of uncertainty which is emphasized later, where there is a strong suggestion that the observer chooses and controls what is seen:

> Le verre grossier de la vitre entame la carrosserie, à la base, derrière la roue avant, d'une large échancrure arrondie. Bien au-dessous, isolé de la masse principale par une zone de terre caillouteuse, un demi-disque en tôle peinte est réfracté à plus de cinquante centimètres de son emplacement réel. Ce morceau aberrant peut du reste se déplacer à volonté, changer de forme en même temps que de dimensions : il grandit de droite à gauche, s'amenuise dans le sens inverse, devient croissant vers le bas, cercle complet lorsqu'il prend de la hauteur, ou bien se frange (mais c'est là une position de très faible étendue, presque instantanée) de deux auréoles concentriques. Enfin, pour de plus grands écarts, il se fond dans la surface mère, ou disparaît, d'une contraction brusque. (pp. 95-96)

Not only is perspective on an object a matter of the viewer's choice or pleasure, the intermediary action of the lens referring to this element of volition, it is so much a matter of subjectivity that the perceived object may disappear completely if perspective is changed: "se fond dans la surface mère, ou disparaît." In the final description of the pane the arrival of A... and Franck in the blue car is reflected "au centre du carreau médian" (p. 203), the reader being reminded of the nature of human visual perception, as well as of the reflected perspective when "les irregularités de la vitre faussent le détail du geste" (p. 204).

The cumulative purpose of the appearances of the window-pane in La Jalousie, the ambiguous text about the plantation, the courtyard, the truck, the blue sedan, and the comings and goings of A... and Franck, is very different from the goal implied in the passage about the lighthouse lens in Le Voyeur. In the earlier novel the lens is an object which is described and discussed, the narrative flowing over it and around it as part of the surface structure. In La Jalousie, the window and the pane are central to the unfolding of the narrative, part of the deep structure which is transformed on the surface to create not only ambiguity in meaning (as in Le Voyeur), but also ambiguity in action; what is seen by the observing eye, and what A... and Franck actually do, offer many possible contradictions. The window-pane in La Jalousie is thus part of what Robbe-Grillet calls the "fonction créatrice" of the text, an activity that in this case is evidently dependent upon visual perspective, and which in the end is self-destructive. For instance, exact detail about the window-pane itself does not increase beyond the third passage in La Jalousie (pp. 57-58); the same is true of the recounting of A... 's and Franck's actions. In this passage they arrive at the house in a car, but even that is not definite, as the final section describes their arrival as well -- whether the same one, or a repeated one, is unknown. The visual techniques used in the text support this atmosphere of dubiousness, in particular the description of light and colour. In the first passage the light in the dining-room, coming through the closed window is not merely green, but "comme verdie" or greenish, and thus of uncertain tonal value (p. 56). In the second passage the open windows both frame, and reflect, the truck in the courtyard, but "dans le battant gauche, le paysage réfléchi est plus brillant quoique plus sombre" (p. 57). The light and colour here are even more indefinite because they are created by reflection of light in the open window, rather than a refraction of light through the closed pane. The impact of the lighting also moves from the single question of tone to the dual question of tone and chroma. The lighthouse beam in Le Voyeur is ambiguous in relation to area and distance; here it is a matter of the quality of the light rays. The light in the second passage contrasts with that in the first, however, as it is in direct contact with the exterior as it appears in the glass : "des taches de verdure circulaire . . . de la teinte des bananiers" (p. 57). In the next description of the window-pane, the same technique is repeated, but following that, the actual optical instrument, the glass, reasserts itself as the visual technique, deforming, distorting, or masking. Colour and light only enter into the description again, later, as "la couleur beige-grisâtre de l'empierrement poussiéreux qui constitue le sol de la cour" (p. 127).

In the visual sensations of colour and light, ambiguity is thus present in several of the sections depicting the window and pane; their descriptive function moves from the interior of a room, to a reflection in a glass, and finally to an outdoor setting. The use of colour is particularly responsible for the atmosphere of ambiguity, as it is mentioned throughout in terms of value and chroma; rather than hue -- the attribute which clearly classifies one colour as different from any other, for example a red from an orange, or a red from a green. The subtle uncertainty, produced by the use of colour, takes on a more overt form in those passages where it is clearly indicated that the eye of the observer, changing angles, can, through the flaws in the pane, shape and reshape the perception of the outdoor setting, at will, even to the point where certain aspects may be falsified, or simply disappear. The heightened visual perception and sensation in La Jalousie increases the ambiguous activity of the text, structuring the fiction around the revelation of setting and event which becomes first of all more detailed, and then more uncertain; the "fonction créatrice" is accomplished through the depiction of the window-pane, the visual technique which creates and destroys.

The use of a glass as "lens" is less important in Robbe-Grillet's later novels, La Jalousie being the only book where it provides a deep structure rather than a simpler image or narrative description. In Dans le labyrinthe the window in the tavern door is mentioned, and in La Maison de rendez-vous the foot of a champagne glass creates a lens through which is seen the petal of a hibiscus flower; "Le gros homme [repose] sa coupe de champagne, vide, sur la nappe blanche défraîchie près d'une fleur fanée d'hibiscus, dont un pétale se trouve alors pris sous le disque de cristal formant la base du verre."[25] A similar description is repeated later with the additional detail that the hibiscus is "de couleur rouge sang" (p. 46). While the foot of the champagne glass functions metaphorically as a lens and thus fashions a visual viewpoint, the flower clearly suggests an image of the female sexual organs. Neither aspect of the image partakes of the deep textual structure, however, for it is one of many which are part of the book's surface structure, and that constitute the greater part of the fiction. Visual ambiguity is indicated in a more literal fashion than in La Jalousie. In two succeeding passages broken glass is mentioned: at first only one glass is destroyed, "il y a eu l'épisode du verre brisé dont les fragments de cristal jonchent le sol" (p. 65), but later quantities of them are broken "une pleine caisse de coupes à champagne ébréchees, fêlées, sans pied, ou même réduit en menus morceaux, méconnaissables" (p. 133). The image seen through a glass does not slip away into obscurity and confusion as in La Jalousie; the glass "lens" is multiplied and the image then dissolved and dispersed instantaneously, visible one moment, fragmented and demolished the next.

In order to be obliterated so instantly the images must be part of the text's surface structure. The lack of connection with a deep surface structure is also indicated by the very slight transformation in the depiction of the champagne glass, so subtle that it is evident only if the two passages are placed side by side:

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[25] Alain Robbe-Grillet, La Maison de rendez-vous (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1965), p. 39. All further references are to this edition of the novel and appear in the text.

> "Si vous n'avez pas vu cela, vous n'avez rien vu", dit à son sujet le gros homme en reposant sa coupe de champagne, vide, sur la nappe blanche défraîchie près d'une fleur fanée d'hibiscus, dont un pétale se trouve alors pris sous le disque de cristal formant la base du verre. (p. 29)
>
> Et il repose le verre sur la nappe blanche défraîchie près d'une fleur fanée d'hibiscus, de couleur rouge sang, dont un pétale se trouve pris sous le disque de cristal formant la base du pied. (p. 46)

The transformation is a matter of a single, added detail beside the colour of the petal, the shift from "le base du verre" to "la base du pied." But through the skilfull change in the glass lens Robbe-Grillet brings visual perception into contact with another aspect of the creation of a text, a method he explains in the essay on Raymond Roussel where he analyses certain forms of Roussel's writing including:

> . . . pour commencer, précisément cette recherche qui détruit elle-même, par l'écriture, son propre objet.
>
> Cette recherche, nous l'avons dit, est purement formelle. C'est avant tout un itinéraire, un chemin logique qui conduit d'un état donné à un autre état -- ressemblant beaucoup au premier, bien qu'il soit atteint par un long détour. On en trouve un nouvel exemple -- et qui a l'avantage supplémentaire de se situer entièrement dans le domaine du langage -- avec les courts récits posthumes dont Roussel a lui-même expliqué l'architecture: deux phrases qui se prononcent de façon identique, à une lettre près, mais dont les sens sont totalement sans rapport, à cause des acceptions différentes dans lesquelles sont pris les mots semblables. Le trajet, c'est ici l'histoire, l'anecdote, permettant de réunir les deux phrases, qui constitueront, l'une les premiers mots du texte, l'autre les derniers. Les épisodes

> les plus absurdes seront ainsi justifiés par leur fonction d'ustensiles, de véhicules, d'intermédiaires; l'anecdote n'a ouvertement plus de contenu, mais un mouvement, un ordre, une composition; elle n'est plus, elle aussi, qu'une mécanique: à fois machine à reproduire et machine à modifier. (p. 74)

The method discussed here in relation to Roussel's work, also seems to apply to Robbe-Grillet's depiction of the champagne glass and the petal; the image is not part of an anecdote, but of a textual order which reproduces and modifies itself, or in this instance, a visual order which does the same. Robbe-Grillet is intent not only on modification, however, but also on gommage which is indisolubly linked with the fonction créatrice; to accomplish this gommage, the glass is shattered, then multiplied and shattered again. Gone is the method of destruction found in La Jalousie, where the visual technique penetrates the structure of the text and it is thus able to blur into ambiguity. As with Roussel's modifications, the transformations relating to the champagne glass are slight changes in surface structure; because the image is not completely integral to the text it can be destroyed, even destroyed repeatedly, the impact being that much more profound if the procedure is a visual one. Operating in this manner, Robbe-Grillet emphasizes the subjective level of the visual, as he does in La Jalousie, but in La Maison, where the visual perception remains on the surface, the subjectivity becomes totally precarious.

Such precariousness is also a result of the increased instantaneity of the visual image perceived through a glass as in La Maison, as well as in Projet. In the latter novel a window-pane functions as a lens, as in La Jalousie, but in this case without the preliminary procedures of development and modification. The shattering of the pane is mentioned almost immediately, at the beginning of Projet. Laura is standing looking out a window, when the following event takes place:

> Celle-ci fait un brusque saut en arrière, assez rapide pour que ni les policiers ni l'indicateur ne puissent avoir le temps de terminer leur mouvement de tête vers le haut avant qu'elle n'ait elle-même disparu de l'emplacement désigné par la main gantée de noir. Mais son recul a été si vif et incontrôlé qu'il s'est accompagné d'un geste maladroit de la main gauche, dont la grosse bague en argent est venue frapper un carreau avec violence.
>
> Le choc a produit un son net et clair. En même temps est apparue, s'étendant à toute la surface du rectangle, une fêlure en étoile à multiples rayons. Mais aucun morceau ne s'en détache, si ce n'est, avec un retard notable, un petit triangle de verre très pointu, long de cinq ou six centimètres, qui bascule lentement vers l'intérieur et choit sur le carrelage avec un bruit cristallin, se brisant à son tour en trois fragments plus menus. (pp. 24-25)

As with the incident of the broken glass in La Maison, the notion of fragmentation is again emphasized, but in Projet the visual technique develops a new angle; the optical instrument itself is fragmented, going far beyond the mere distortion of the flawed glass in La Jalousie. In Projet Laura's sight is not contorted throughout several successive passages, as is the visual perspective in La Jalousie, instead one moment of vision is totally disassociated from the next by the sudden breakage. The intermediacy of the visual instrument, which in some way controls the prospect, is suddenly destroyed. It is notable that after the pane breaks, "Laura contemple un long moment la vitre cassée, puis à travers le carreau voisin, qui est semblable mais intact" (p. 24); afraid to look directly upon the street scene, she searches for a replacement for the intervening lens. Nonetheless, her viewpoint is shattered instantaneously, without the development of a particular structure or image. The incident is momentary in nature, confirming its visual status, but by no means ascertaining its meaning. The foot of the champagne glass in La Maison is used to create a surface, object image from a detail, but the window in Projet only indicates a visual standpoint, and its subsequent disruption.

The extent of the significance of Robbe-Grillet's use of the glass or lens to depict the visual can only be properly grasped in relation to other aspects of his technique, but we have seen that its use in the narrative produces a visual point of view which may be a description, a part of a novel's deep structure, or a portion of its surface imagery. As description, in Les Gommes and Le Voyeur, it suggests the optical functions of framing and of lighting, but as part of a novel's structure, whether deep or surface, it plays a vital part in the fonction créatrice of "construction et gommage" of the text in La Jalousie and La Maison, the activity of gommage making vision susceptible to ambiguity, and constituted by subjectivity.

The glass, as an optical instrument, is one means by which Robbe-Grillet shows that narrative point of view has become visual in his fiction. Other techniques, such as the use of precise, geometrical terminology in description, serve as a means to the same end. In Les Gommes, the precision in depiction retains a relationship to descriptive passages in novels of the realist tradition. On the way to the post office, Wallas the detective exhibits precise powers of observation:

> Le déroulement rassurant s'est rétabli. A présent les employés de bureau sortent de chez eux, tenant à la main la serviette en simili-cuir contenant les trois sandwiches traditionnels, pour le casse-croûte de midi. Ils lèvent les yeux vers le ciel quand ils passent le seuil de leur porte et s'en vont, en serrant autour de leur cou des cache-nez de tricot brun.
>
> Wallas sent le froid sur son visage . . . . Pourtant les sens sont loin d'être engourdis: Wallas reste le témoin très attentif d'un spectacle qui n'a rien perdu de ses qualités d'ordre et de permanence; peut-être au contraire la ligne devient-elle plus stricte, abandonnant peu à peu ses ornaments et ses mollesses. Mais peut-être aussi cette précision d'épure n'est-elle qu'illusoire, provoquée seulement par un estomac vide. (pp. 46-47)

But "cette précision d'épure" is told, rather than named; the actions are precise only in as much as the reader is told that they are precise. Precision here is not part of the fictional structure, instead it is explicated in the anecdote. The paring of precision and the illusion of precision suggests an idea which materializes in geometrical descriptions in later novels, where geometry is both exact and inexact at the same time. In such cases the mode of description is not verbal, as in the passage from Les

Gommes, but manipulates the visual language.

An excellent example of such use of geometry is found in Le Voyeur, when the ship is shown approaching the pier. This is the first and longest of four passages which depict the pier, but the section, which seems very precise on first reading, demonstrates many levels of visual point of view and technique, and thus is deserving of a lengthy quotation:

> Le bateau n'avait plus l'air de progresser . . . . En regardant avec plus d'attention, on voyait le bord de pierre qui se rapprochait insensiblement.
>
> Le bord de pierre -- une arête vive, oblique, à l'intersection de deux plans perpendiculaires: la paroi verticale fuyant tout droit vers le quai et la rampe qui rejoint le haut de la digue -- se prolonge à son extrémité supérieure, en haut de la digue, par une ligne horizontale fuyant tout droit vers le quai.
>
> Le quai, rendu plus lointain par l'effect de perspective, emet de part et d'autre de cette ligne principale un faisceau de parallèles qui délimitent, avec une netteté encore accentuée par l'éclairage du matin, une série de plans allongés, alternativement horizontaux et verticaux: le sommet du parapet massif protégeant le passage du côté du large, la paroi intérieure du parapet, la chaussée sur le haut de la digue, le flanc sans gardefou qui plonge dans l'eau du port. Les deux surfaces verticales sont dans l'ombre, les deux autres sont vivement éclairées par le soleil -- le haut du parapet dans toute sa largeur et la chaussée à l'exception d'une étroite bande obscure: l'ombre portée du parapet. Théoriquement on devrait voir encore dans l'eau du port l'image renversée de l'ensemble et, à la surface, toujours dans le même jeu de parallèles, l'ombre portée de la haute paroi verticale qui filerait tout droit vers le quai.
>
> Vers le bout de la jetée, la construction se complique, la chaussée se divise en deux: du côté du parapet un passage rétréci conduisant jusqu'au fanal, et, sur la gauche, la cale en pente rejoignant le niveau de l'eau. C'est ce dernier rectangle, incliné et vu de biais, qui attire les regards; coupé en diagonale par l'ombre de la paroi qu'il longe, il présente de façon satisfaisante pour l'oeil un triangle sombre et un triangle clair.
>
> Tous les autres plans sont brouillés. L'eau du

> port n'est pas assez calme pour que l'on puisse y distinguer le reflet de la digue. De même, l'ombre de celle-ci n'y forme qu'une bande très imprécise, entamée sans cesse par les ondulations de la surface. L'ombre du parapet sur la chaussée tend, elle, à se confondre avec la face verticale qui la projette. Chaussée et parapet sont du reste encombrés de filets qui sèchent, de caisses vides et de grands paniers en osier -- casiers à homards et à langoustes, bourriches à huîtres, pièges à crabes. Entre ces entassements circule avec peine la foule accourue pour l'arrivée du bateau.
>
> Quant au bateau, il se trouve à un niveau si inférieur, lorsque la mer est basse, qu'il devient alors impossible d'apercevoir, depuis le pont, autre chose que la paroi abrupte de la digue fuyant tout droit vers le quai et interrompue à l'autre bout, un peu avant le fanal, par la cale d'accostage -- oblique, s'achevant à la base en une surface plus lisse, brunie par l'eau, couverte à moitié de mousses verdâtres -- toujours située à la même distance, comme si toute progression avait pris fin.
>
> Pourtant, en regardant avec plus d'attention, on voyait le bord de pierre qui se rapprochait insensiblement.
>
> Le soleil du matin, légèrement voilé comme à l'ordinaire, marquait à peine les ombres -- suffisamment malgré tout pour diviser la pente en deux parties symétriques, l'une plus sombre, l'autre plus claire, pointant un bec aigu vers le bas de la descente, où l'eau montait en biseau et clapotait entre les algues.
>
> Le mouvement qui portait le petit vapeur vers ce triangle de pierre, émergeant ainsi de l'obscurité, était oblique lui-même et d'une lenteur de plus en plus voisine de l'arrêt absolu. (pp. 12-14)

This description of the pier scene is framed in terms of perspective, which on first impression seems to be part of the unfolding of the verbal aspect of the narrative, situating the character Mathias. But upon closer examination the description does not develop as in a primarily verbal text; it participates in the instantaneity which constitutes visual image or apprehension. At first, the ship "n'avait plus l'air de progresser," then it moves in a fashion that is "insensible," and later "comme si toute progression avait pris fin," even though the stone pier moves closer, insensibly. Finally, the oblique movement of the boat appears as "voisine de l'arrêt absolu." Although the absolute, frozen motion Robbe-Grillet mentions in his essay on Roussel is not indicated here, the ship's arrival at the pier approaches immobility, the depiction being repeatedly fragmented by the suggestion of motionlessness. In the 1976 interview with Maxime de la Falaise McKendry, Robbe-Grillet says of the contemporary novel:

> . . . in the romanesque description there are moments which have the effect of an image: where one has the impression that one sees something, then in the end the more the description evolves, the more obscure the image becomes; and at the end of the passage, instead of seeing clearly, one is completely in the dark! It has all been the momentary effect of images![26]

When what Robbe-Grillet defines as description attains the status of momentary image, at what might be called its peak point, it is definitely a visual depiction, although the visual aspect is always broken down or destroyed by the movement of the description, frequently becoming ambiguous to the point of incomprehensibility. In the preceding passage from Le Voyeur the image achieves its basic relationship to the visual, through the stoppage constituted by the frequent reminders that the boat's movement is infinitesimal, that what should be in motion appears motionless.

True to the idea expressed in the 1976 interview, the visual image of the boat and pier are ultimately destroyed by descriptive ambiguity, but the gommage is also related to other visual techniques; the frequent reference to perspective, as if the images were constructed on a picture plane, the pier appearing longer than it is in reality "par l'effet de perspective," the landing slip is "vue de biais" and the boat floats so low that it is "impossible d'apercevoir" from its deck; all use exact terms of visual language such as "ligne horizontale," "surfaces verticales," and "plans allongés." Yet in spite of the fact that such visual structure and language is used to construct the image, it is impossible to make a coherent sketch of the lines and planes which constitute the description of the dock area; it is never clear which line relates to which plane, or which surface is actually horizontal or vertical. In light of this particular ambiguity, the visual perspective used is obviously not that which employs the illusory reality of the vanishing point, but rather one which is, to say the least, distorted. László Moholy-Nagy discusses distorted perspective in his book Vision in Motion:

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[26] McKendry, p. 32.

> Cézanne's desire to bring the objects more truthfully to the spectator led him to choose the most revealing viewpoint in the very same painting, from above, from the side, from below, as it best suited the discrimination of the single object. The result was a composite view, a "distortion" if judged within the convention of the vanishing point central perspective, but in reality it was vision in motion (rendered on the picture plane).
>
> We may thus say that distortion equals motion because what we generally call "distortion" is only distortion in relation to the fixed perspective of the renaissance painter.
>
> Distortion can then be understood -- in addition

to its other meanings -- as space-time synonym.[27] Distortion in the manner outlined by Moholy-Nagy is part of the ambiguous perspective apparent in Robbe-Grillet's description; upon close examination of the passage it becomes evident that the pier is viewed from several angles: above, beside, and below. According to Moholy-Nagy's definition of distorted perspective, then, the images in the text enter into temporal movement on a spatial or visual level, their spatiality being a further reason they partake of instantaneity. We are dealing with a novel rather than a painting, nonetheless, and this results in another level of ambiguity: the contradiction between the momentary, that is visual, and its structural foundation, which is verbal.

The mention of light and dark areas in the description of the pier develops visual ambiguity even further. In "Nature, humanisme, tragédie" Robbe-Grillet points out that the uncertainty of visual apprehension inherent in the perception of colour is due to the fact that colours "change avec l'éclairage" (p. 59). The effect of line and plane in the image of the pier is apparently influenced by the morning light. The pier appears in one paragraph as a series of elongated planes "avec une netteté encore accentuée par l'éclairage du matin." In the same paragraph other planes and surfaces are described in the following manner:

> Les deux surfaces verticales sont dans l'ombre, les deux autres sont vivement eclairées par le soleil -- le haut du parapet dans toute sa largeur et la

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[27] László Moholy-Nagy, Vision in Motion (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1946), p. 118.

> chaussée à l'exception d'une étroite bande obscure: l'ombre portée du parapet. (p. 13)

Four paragraphs further on the light is described in a totally different fashion:

> Le soleil du matin, légèrement voilé comme à l'ordinaire, marquait à peine les ombres -- suffisamment malgré tout pour diviser la pente en deux parties symétriques, l'une plus sombre, l'autre plus claire, pointant un bec aigu vers le bas de la descente, où l'eau montait en biseau et clapotait entre les algues. (p. 14)

Here, the sunshine is sufficient enough to indicate points of light and shadow, but the strong morning light has disappeared. The change in lighting cannot be explained by the passage of time, as the entire section is devoted to the moment just before the arrival of the boat at the pier. But it may be understood as ambiguity, in the use of imagery, that acts on two levels. As has been noted, Robbe-Grillet suggests that uncertainty is inherent in any description which uses light to form an image, but in this section from Le Voyeur the author is not content that such meaning remain only on the level of connotation. Thus a second, denoted level of ambiguity arises: the overt contradiction between the two passages that describe the effect of the morning light, this unconcealed discrepancy which is further supported by the comment in the second passage that the overcast sun is "comme à l'ordinaire," when immediately before it is depicted as shining brightly. The lighting, which may seem on first reading an attempt to define exact forms, due to the use of precise terminology, only delineates light and shadow without clarifying the shape of objects. It is essential to know from which direction the light comes, if form is to be indicated in an exact, visual fashion. As E.H. Gombrich remarks in his book Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation, "shadow, as Hogarth knew, is only an indication of form as long as we know where the light comes from."[24] Robbe-Grillet's omission of such information is obviously deliberate; in a description that pretends to give exact detail about the picture plane and visual perspective, such an absence is as telling an ambiguity as the wealth of facts which contradict themselves.

The following, shorter passage, which describes the pier, slips even further into the formal ambiguity of the visual image. In the first description the pier gives the effect of a series of parallels and planes in the morning light; the second one creates the impression of a self-conscious composition using the visual language of line without relation to real objects or substances, "la jetée était à nouveau déserte, faisceau de lignes parallèles délimitant une série de plans allongés, alternativement horizontaux et verticaux, bandes alternées d'ombre et de lumière" (p. 42). Ironically, this section finishes with the line "tout au bout se dressait le fanal qui marquait l'entrée du port," an indication of a light source at a point in the description where the actual form of the pier is very uncertain. The pier is described as if on a flat plane, resulting in a two-dimensional visual space without a "realistic" sense of recession. By contrast, the third, extremely short depiction of the pier re-establishes the notion of perspective (although the uncertain light source retains the indefinite form):

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[24] Gombrich, p. 270.

> . . . il s'aperçut qu'il était parvenu à l'extrémité du quai, à l'endroit où prenait naissance, presque perpendiculairement, la longe digue aux lignes parallèles qui fuyaient en faisceau vers le fanal, où elles semblaient converger. Deux bandes horizontales ensoleillées, alternant avec deux bandes d'ombre verticales. (p. 73)

The lines, which appear to converge, reintroduce the vanishing point perspective of the first passage, a perspective which seems to be retained in the final description of the pier. "Plus à droite, l'arête formée par le plan incliné avec la paroi verticale commençait son mouvement oblique de recul" (p. 254). The mockingly precise depictions of the pier are involved in a continuous process of construction and destruction, repeating and modifying visual techniques. The repetition produces a different kind of instantaneity from that achieved by the apparent immobility of the boat in the first passage. As with the recurrence of the window-pane in La Jalousie, the reiterated mention of the pier integrates it into the deep structure of Le Voyeur, providing the infrastructure for the continuous construction and gommage of the surface, visual structure.

Towards the end of Le Voyeur, in the final depiction of the pier, as its irregularities appear beneath the waves, the idea of form in perspective disintegrates under the most forceful visual technique used for this purpose in the novel:

> Au delà, sous la mince couche liquide recouvrant la pierre, on distinguait avec une grande précision les moindres aspérités des blocs, ainsi que des joints en ciment séparent ceux-ci de lignes plus ou moins creuses. Les reliefs y étaient à la fois plus apparents que dans l'air et plus irréels, se signalant aux regards par des ombres accentuées -- exagérées peut-être -- sans toutefois donner l'impression de véritables saillies, comme si les choses avaient été figurées là en trompe-l'oeil. (p. 254)

The function of shadow is different here from the other passages; in the other descriptions defined form, an object with volume occupying space, is hinted at, only to be contradicted by either the lack of a definitive light source, or a depiction which suggests plane rather than recession. Chiaroscuro shadow is not found in the final image, which relates neither to the origin of the light nor to perspective; instead, these shadows are those of _trompe-l'oeil_. _The Oxford Companion to Art_ notes that:

> The authentic _trompe-l'oeil_ is essentially a picture of shallow depth, since it is restricted in subject matter to surfaces that lie in or near the picture plane, such as a letter pinned on a board, postage stamps or playing-cards, or low relief sculpture. The eyes easily detect the absence of parallax in representations of objects of greater depth. Nevertheless, the deception can be worked for those too if the _trompe-l'oeil_ is situated where it can only be seen from an appreciable distance and from one point of view.[29]

_Trompe-l'oeil_ is a term usually applied to a visual image, one which is the ultimate attainment of illusion. Even more than the ambiguous shadows in the earlier passage, those in the above description are "irréels," a subjective aspect related to the movement of the water. Part of a trompe-l'oeil surface, nothing lies behind the shadows, no "solid" reality. As Robbe-Grillet says in his essay on Roussel, the shadows take on the aspect of "une toile de fond, il n'y a rien derrière ces surfaces" (p. 71). In the visual descriptions of the pier, precision and its contradictions culminate in a visual image which indicates opacity without mystery; detail and exactitude do not contribute to a knowledge of fact, but to a record of subjective impressions, here created and emphasized by the shifting nature of the image. They ultimately resolve themselves into a trompe-l'oeil format, acknowledging that there is no secret, objective essence in the object perceived. Reality (or objectivity) both begins and ends in subjectivity, shifting and ambiguous, the only way Mathias can perceive the pier, and the world around him.

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[29] Harold Osborne, ed., _The Oxford Companion to Art_ (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 1161.

In the midst of yet another apparently precise description, Robbe-Grillet refers to a different mode of visual perception when Mathias sees certain markings on the wall near the pier:

> Contre la paroi verticale en retrait, Mathias finit par arrêter son choix sur un signe en forme de huit, gravé avec assez de précision pour qu'il put servir de repère. Cette marque se trouvait exactement en face de lui, c'est-à-dire a quatre ou cinq mètres sur la gauche du point d'émergence de la cale. Une brusque montée du niveau la fit disparaître. Quand il revit, trois secondes plus tard, l'emplacement qu'il s'était efforcé de ne pas quitter des yeux, il ne fut plus tout à fait sûr d'y reconnaître le dessin repéré; d'autres anfractuosités de la pierre ressemblaient autant -- et ne ressemblaient pas plus

> -- à ces deux petits cercles accolés dont il conservait l'image. (p. 16)

Mathias' glance shifts between two types of perspective, which José Ortega y Gasset has named "proximate vision" and "distant vision":

> The proximate vision . . . organizes the whole field of vision, imposing upon it an optical hierarchy: a privileged central nucleus articulates itself against the surrounding area. The central object is a luminous hero, a protagonist standing out against a "mass" . . . .
>
> Compare this with distant vision. Instead of fixing a proximate object, let the eye, passive but free, prolong its line of vision to the limit of the visual field . . . . The structure of our hierarchized elements disappears. The ocular field is homogeneous . . . . Nothing possesses a sharp profile; everything is background, confused, almost formless. On the other hand, the duality of proximate vision is succeeded by a perfect unity of the whole visual field . . . .
>
> When we oppose proximate to distant vision, we do not mean that in the latter the object is farther away. To look means here, speaking narrowly, to focus both ocular rays on a point which, thanks to this, becomes favoured, optically privileged. In distant vision we do not fix the gaze on any point, but rather to embrace the whole field, including its boundaries.[30]

In Le Voyeur proximate vision is demonstrated when Mathias, searching for a point of reference upon the parapet, eventually perceives a mark in the shape of a figure eight, for he sees this form as a central nucleus, located at a precise point. But this precision is an illusion, as a breaking wave causes him to lose sight of the spot; incapable of reestablishing it within his optical field, he refocuses, creating the perception of distant vision, where, unable to distinguish the original figure eight from other marks on the parapet, his sight embraces "the whole field." Ortega y Gasset also notes that the nearness or remoteness of an object is not a factor in his definition of the two types of vision, making it consistent with Mathias' change in perspective that is without a change in physical position. Nonetheless, the breaking of the wave which interrupts the proximate vision is a reminder of uncertainty, that consistency is always threatened with inconsistency, objectivity with subjectivity.

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[30] José Ortega y Gasset, "On Point of View in the Arts," Partisan Review, 16, No. 8 (August 1949), 824-25.

In La Jalousie the precise method of description is developed even further through the use of geometrical terminology in the repeated depiction of the plantation. The descriptive series of the pier in Le Voyeur, and of the banana plantation in La Jalousie, differ in narrative viewpoint: in Le Voyeur the settings and objects are perceived through either the eyes of Mathias or those of an omniscient but unintrusive narrator (traditional in third person narration). In La Jalousie the perceiving eye that carries the narrative (or the "je-néant" narrator as he is named by Bruce Morrissette) is not presented in such an open fashion, producing levels of narrative ambiguity.[31] In certain passages A... could be the "perceiver," but it is impossible to be sure that it is not actually the narrator, or husband, watching what he believes A... sees. For example, in the first two sections depicting it, the banana plantation is seen from the house. In the first section it is stated in exactly what way the landscape is visible to "l'observateur posté sur la terrasse" (p. 13) of the house, detail on the opposite hillside being more readily apprehensible than that nearby. The observer is not mentioned in the second passage, but it is apparent from the similar manner in which the setting is described, that the house provides the vantage point, the most likely "perceiver" being the "je-néant" narrator. However, in the third description, it is stated that A... is looking through a chink in the blind towards the veranda of the house, followed immediately by a description of the man on the plantation bridge and the plantation itself (pp. 40-41). This technique may be taken as a characteristic break or fragmentation in the narrative, but it most likely follows a shift in A...'s gaze from veranda to exterior setting. Nonetheless, the break establishes an ambiguity in the midst of a precisely geometrical depiction; the movement may not be a logical continuation of A...'s glance, it could be what the narrator imagines as such.

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[31] Morrissette, The Novels of Robbe-Grillet, p.114.

The suggestion that the narrator is the single and competent observer, perceiving from a particular vantage point, is invalidated, if aspects of these descriptions are considered as authentic attempts to create images of visual, rather than verbal, perception. Structurally, the plantation is depicted in geometric shapes such as trapezoids, quincunxes, rectangles, oblique rows, etc. But in the third description even this geometry of arrangement is destroyed.

Certain banana trees have been cut down or harvested:

> Leurs places vides ressortent avec une netteté parfaite, dans la succession des alignements géométriques. Mais, en regardant mieux, il est possible de discerner le rejet déjà grand qui va remplacer le bananier coupé, à quelques décimètres de la vieille souche, commençant ainsi à gauchir la régularité idéale des quinconces. (pp. 40-41)

Here, as elsewhere, the geometrical arrangement is not quite perfect: the trapezoid is a few trees short in certain places, new shoots spoil the regularity of alternate planting. This break in perfection, the cutting of the trees, also introduces a temporal movement (at one moment the trees are there, then they are gone) of construction and destruction, which suggests instantaneity and reinforces the visual aspect of the image.

Beyond disturbing the supposed perfect geometry of the setting, using another visual technique, Robbe-Grillet also upsets any conjecture that the vision of the je-néant narrator is objective. He gives the view from the house in the first description of the plantation:

> Tout autour du jardin, jusqu'aux limites de la plantation, s'étend la masse verte des bananiers.
>
> A droite comme à gauche leur proximité trop grande, jointe au manque d'élévation relatif de l'observateur posté sur la terrasse, empêche d'en bien distinguer l'ordonnance; tandis que, vers le fond de la vallée, la disposition en quinconce s'impose au premier regard. Dans certaines parcelles de replantation très récente -- celles où la terre rougeâtre commence tout juste à céder la place au feuillage -- il est même aisé de suivre la fuite régulière des quatre directions entrecroisées, suivant lesquelles s'alignent les jeunes troncs.
>
> Cet exercise n'est pas beaucoup plus difficile, malgré la pousse plus avancée, pour les parcelles qui occupent le versant d'en face: c'est en effect l'endroit qui s'offre le plus commodément à l'oeil, celui dont la surveillance pose le moins de

problèmes . . . . (pp. 12-13)

The perception of the plantation here is dependent on different distances between the observer and the various landscape areas under surveillance, not a factor in Ortega y Gasset's definition of proximate and distant vision. Instead, Robbe-Grillet articulates the function of optical perspective in visual perception in this passage. The banana trees close to the house are visible, but their shapes cannot be grasped and differentiated. However, when the landscape recedes into the distance this problem is rectified: "vers le fond de la vallée, la disposition en quinconce s'impose au premier regard," and later, "le versant d'en face: c'est en effect l'endroit qui s'offre le plus commodément à l'oeil." Unexpectedly, aspects of a setting are not more easily grasped by the naked eye if seen from closeup (as might be anticipated in a traditional, realist description); instead, the closer the object, the more the likelihood it will create visual confusion or distortion, as a particular detail can then make a disproportionate claim on the attention.

The perspective used in the depiction of the plantation is part of the visual structure of the text which delineates the narrator's field of sight. A landscape may be interpreted as a visual image employing a specific form of perspective. The placement of the trees in the valley is easily determined according to the description: "il est même aisé de suivre la fuite régulière des quatre directions entrecroisées, suivant lesquelles s'alignent les jeunes troncs." The four, regular lanes of trees exist in the space of linear perspective, receding and intersecting ("la fuite régulière des quatre directions entrecroisées") as in a painting where "parallel lines receding from the spectator appear to meet at a point on eye level."[22] Visual perspective here creates a description, in contrast to the passages in Le Voyeur, where perspective is so uncertain that it provides the basic ambiguity which eventually accomplishes the gommage of the description. But the use of perspective in La Jalousie is not without another type of ambiguity, for even carefully constructed linear perspective, in drawing or painting, is a form of illusion, an attempt to create the impression of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface. It is wrong to assume, therefore, that the receding lines of the banana trees are "real"; they too are a construction.

As might be anticipated, in any repeated description Robbe-Grillet attempts to introduce an element of instantaneity to assure the visual nature of the images he presents; such is the case when the figures of the workmen by the bridge intrude on the plantation landscape. At first there is only one man, "l'homme se tient toujours immobile" (p. 40), later there are five, "les ouvriers du pont sont au nombre du cinq . . . parfaitement immobile" (pp. 103-104).

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[22] Frederick Malins, Understanding Paintings: The Elements of Composition, A Spectrum Book (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1981), p.49.

Still further on:

> . . . . la disposition des personnages n'est plus la même, de part et d'autre du pont en rondins. Il ne reste qu'un seul des ouvriers sur la rive droite, les quatre autres étant alignés en face de lui. Mais leur posture, à aucun d'eux n'a changé. (pp. 107-108)

The pattern in which the workmen are arranged is frozen momentarily, but when subject to re-arrangement, and the loss of this form of instantaneity, another element of the depiction attains immobility -- the posture of the men. In either case the images of the men are taken up, frozen for a moment, and then re-arranged or dropped. Instantaneity makes precision provisional and volatile, ready to disintegrate within a fictional structure where description is formulated visually and spatially as if on the surface of a canvas (the technique of repetition breaking down linear temporality).

The note of ambiguity on which La Jalousie closes is directly related to developments in the description of the plantation. Until the final two pages of the novel, the landscape is depicted only in terms of geometrical proportions, never in relation to the amount of light on the setting, or according to the sunlight that relates to a certain time of day. However, the conclusion of the book uses lighting as a visual technique to emphasize the momentary nature of the image, the brief moment of tropical twilight, before the darkness:

> De l'autre côté de la vallée, le soleil éclaire de ses rayons horizontaux les arbres isolés qui parsèment la brousse, au-dessus de la zone cultivée. Leurs ombres très longues barrent le terrain de gros traits parallèles.

> La rivière, au creux de la vallée, s'obscurcit. Déjà le versant nord ne reçoit plus aucun rayon. Le soleil, à l'ouest, s'est caché derrière l'éperon rocheux. A contrejour, la découpure de la paroi de pierre se détache un instant avec précision sur un ciel violemment écairé: une ligne abrupte, à peine bombée, qui se raccorde au plateau par une saillie en pointe vive, suivie d'un second ressaut moins accentué.
>
> Très vite le fond lumineux est devenu plus terne. Au flanc du vallon, les panaches des bananiers s'estompent dans le crépuscule.
>
> Il est six heurs et demie.
>
> La nuit noire et le bruit assourdissant des criquets s'étendent de nouveau, maintenant, sur le jardin et la terrasse, tout autour de la maison. (pp. 217-18)

As has already been noted, colour, and the related function of light, is for Robbe-Grillet the most ambiguous visual sense. The descent of darkness and night over the plantation is like the final flickering of certainty, which loses in the battle with the doubtful and ambiguous nature of existence. To place this passage at the end of the novel is not just another implication of visual uncertainty, it also self-consciously draws attention to the fact that the novel is an invention, a verbal illusion, paralleling the visual illusion of linear perspective.

The use of lighting in the final image of the plantation links the setting, in the sense of visual technique, to the image which opens the story: the veranda column and its shadow. While the column is also described in precise, geometrical terms, a light source is employed consistently to indicate this geometry. In repeated passages throughout La Jalousie, the geometrical depiction is arrived at through the length and effect of the column's shadow on the surroundings. On one level this object is a key to the passing of time, the shaping of the shadow being dependent on the movement of the sun in the sky: morning, afternoon, or evening light. The novel opens:

> Maintenant l'ombre du pilier -- le pilier qui soutient l'angle sud-ouest du toit -- divise en deux parties égales l'angle correspondant de la terrasse. Cette terrasse est une large galerie couverte, entourant la maison sur trois de ses côtés. Comme sa largeur est la même dans la portion médiane et dans les branches latérales, le trait d'ombre projeté par le pilier arrive exactement au coin de la maison; mais il s'arrête là, car seules les dalles de la terrasse sont atteintes par le soleil, qui se trouve encore trop haut dans le ciel. Les murs, en bois, de la maison -- c'est-à-dire la façade et le pignon ouest -- sont encore protégés de ses rayons par le toit (toit commun à la maison proprement dite et à la terrasse). Ainsi, à cet instant, l'ombre de l'extrème bord du toit coïncide exactement avec la ligne, en angle droit, que forment entre elles la terrasse et les deux faces verticales du coin de la maison. (pp. 9-10)

As with the description of the banana plantation, this passage appears to be an exact, geometrical depiction. The dimension of space present in perspective in the former landscape, is replaced by volume in the delineation of the column. Unlike the ambiguous illumination of the pier in Le Voyeur, a definitive light source is given here, allowing the object in question to take on a specific form which creates a shadow. In half of the passages which describe the column the position of the sun in the sky is mentioned, as if, through the creation of shadow, to assert the existence of volume and form in the image. However, the sun as a source of light is only implied in the final three sections: in the third and second to last descriptions this implication arises through the use of a word which signals that the object in question is subject to the vicissitudes of time, whatever its nature -- "maintenant" (pp. 188, 210). The final passage lacks even the indication of a temporal factor; the light source and the time of day are evident only in the shadow's depiction (pp. 214-215). This last image is dependent upon the cumulation of past descriptions to allow the reader to arrive at a cognizance of form.

Although it may be anticipated that growing uncertainty will be the result of a light source which becomes less and less definitive, this does not appear to be Robbe-Grillet's primary intention in depicting the column in this manner. Instead, the column, and most particularly its shadow, serve as a focal point from which the movement of the eye is guided to the person or setting which the author wishes to emphasize, a point of connection among objects and persons. The column's shadow, in the fourth passage, forms a visual pattern in combination with the shadows of the house veranda, roof, and balustrade:

> Sur la terre nue, devant le pignon ouest, se projette l'ombre gauchie de la maison. L'ombre du toit est raccordée à l'ombre de la terrasse par l'ombre oblique du pilier d'angle. La balustrade y forme une bande à peine ajourée, alors que la distance réelle entre les balustres n'est guère plus petite que l'épaisseur moyenne de ceux-ci. (p. 39)

In this image pattern, delineated by the planes and shapes of the shadows, perception moves from the general to the specific: from the yard of the house to the shadows of various parts of the house. While this effect is based, in part, on the order in which the segments are described, or the verbal structure, the description must be grasped as a visual image to understand its significance. Its importance rests in the effect of the pattern as an indication of visual viewpoint: the line which the eye is to follow to the detail of the balusters, their shape and colour. Another description of the column establishes a connection between persons, rather than objects; it follows a lengthy passage that depicts A... brushing her hair at the dressing-table in her bedroom:

> Elle a interrompu ses mouvements, ayant peut-être fini avec ce côté-là. C'est néanmoins sans changer la position des bras, ni bouger le buste, qu'elle tourne tout à fait son visage vers la croisée située à sa gauche, pour regarder la terrasse, la balustrade à jours et le versant opposé du vallon.
>
> L'ombre raccourcie du pilier qui soutient l'angle du toit se projette sur les dalles de la terrasse en direction de la première fenêtre, celle du pignon; mais elle est loin de l'atteindre, car le soleil est encore trop haut dans le ciel. Le pignon de la maison est tout entier dans l'ombre du toit; quant au segment ouest de la terrasse, le long de ce pignon, une bande ensoleillée d'un mètre à peine s'y intercale entre l'ombre du toit et l'ombre de la balustrade, que n'interrompt à ce moment aucune entaille.
>
> C'est devant cette fenêtre, à l'intérieur de la chambre, qu'a été poussée la coiffeuse en acajou verni et marbre blanc, dont un exemplaire figure toujours dans ces habitations de style colonial. (pp. 67-68)

In the first paragraph A... looks out the window; in the second and third paragraphs there is a change of vantage point, the column, shadow, and window are described from the outside, and the dressing-table seems to be depicted from memory, rather than as if seen directly. The column and shadow mark a transitional point between A...'s perspective as she looks out the bedroom window and the vision of the husband or je-néant narrator. Narrative development depends on the change from one viewpoint to another, from one set of eyes to another. A third pair of eyes also enters into the movement of the text, those of the reader, who is guided into the dual prospect of A... and her husband.

In neither the description of the column nor that of the plantation, however, does the visual order participate in the complete ambiguity of the pier's description in Le Voyeur. While the geometrical proportions of the patches of banana trees may be uncertain, there is no doubt that the author makes use of linear perspective in his depiction; the exact layout of the house and veranda may be unknown, but the column and its shadow have a definite form created by a well-defined light source. In contrast, the description in Le Voyeur, with its equivocal suggestions of perspective, plane, line, and lighting, under close scrutiny collapses in verbal and visual confusion. There appear to be two approaches to precision and geometry in the visual technique of the different novels. Because the description of the pier disintegrates in confusion, the visual surface is lost, the insistence on ambiguous images giving no sustenance to the creation of a picture plane on which pictorial space can be developed.[33] In La Jalousie, the more definitive visual techniques suggest the existence of a surface or picture plane, for only on such a plane is it possible to delineate linear perspective or the volume and form of objects. The visual aspects of La Jalousie strongly indicate that, for the visual point of view in his novels, Robbe-Grillet draws increasingly upon techniques common to the domain of painting, not only on those indebted to the verbal medium of fiction. E.H. Gombrich points out that in the art of painting, the notion of the flat surface or picture plane has been of great significance historically, quoting Quatremère de Quincy's statement in Essai sur la nature, le but et les moyens de l'imitation dans les beaux arts (1823), "When the painter packs a vast expanse into a narrow space, when he leads me across the depths of the infinite on a flat surface, and makes the air circulate . . . I love to abandon myself to his illusion, but I want the frame to be there, I want to know that what I see is actually nothing but a canvas or simple plane."[34] He also notes Maurice Denis' advice to the Nabis in Théories (1913): "Remember that a picture, before being a battle horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote, is essentially a plane surface covered with paint in a certain arrangement."[35]

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[33] Christopher Cornford notes that "The space of a painting is to begin with a blank, flat plane having two dimensions only. Normally, the plane is rectangular -- a sheet of paper, a panel, a canvas. But if we make a mark of any kind on this plane -- even a nonrepresentational one such as a dash, a circle or a dab of colour -- at once the

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[33](cont'd) surface is seen as having two generic elements. There is a 'thing' and there is the space in which it seems to exist," "The Language of Painting," p. 98.

[34] Gombrich, p. 279.

[35] Gombrich, p. 279.

The picture plane is manipulated through geometrical precision, lighting, and perspective in Le Voyeur and La Jalousie, but it relates to other visual techniques which predominate as the fonction créatrice in other novels by Robbe-Grillet. Visual artifacts are frequently mentioned or described in his works, and Dans le labyrinthe (1959) appears to be a text that is developed from the etching of a tavern scene. However, in the final story in Robbe-Grillet's volume Instantanés (1962), "La Chambre secrète" (1962), the fiction is shaped by an imaginary visual artifact alone: the content and structure consist of the description of a painting.[36] The story, dedicated to the French painter Gustave Moreau, whose work is often aligned with so-called symbolism, and who impressed André Breton, makes it clear in the final phrase, "vers le haut de la toile" (p. 109), that the images described are those on a painted surface; this visual aspect is suggested both in the dedication, and throughout the description. In fact, the notion that the story describes a painting is so strongly conveyed that avid collectors of Moreau's work have requested that Robbe-Grillet reveal the whereabouts of this previously unknown work.[37]

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[36] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "La Chambre secrète," Instantanés (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1962), pp. 97-109. All further references are to this edition and appear in the text.

[37] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Les Formes du roman contemporain," University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, 12 October 1983.

The mode of description indicates a composition on a picture plane, as with the depiction of the plantation in La Jalousie. The first two paragraphs exemplify this technique; the predominant image is that of a red stain in the shape of "une rosace irrégulière" (p. 97), the totality of which "se détache sur la pâleur d'une surface lisse, arrondie, mate et comme nacrée à la fois, un demi-global raccordé par les courbes douces à une étendue de même teinte pâle -- blancheur atténuée par l'ombre du lieu" (pp. 97-98). The image presented here is not primarily verbal or literal, but visual, although lighting and perspective are subsumed by an analysis of the pictorial composition of texture, contour, line, and tone: the background of the stain is textured as "une surface lisse," "mate et comme nacrée à la fois," its contours are round, joined by curving lines to an area toned in shadowy white. The description continues the formulation in terms of the pictorial elements of composition, perspective, volume, and space, in the next paragraph:

> Au-delà, l'espace est occupé par les fûts cylindriques des colonnes qui se multiplient et s'estompent progressivement, vers des profondeurs où se distingue l'amorce d'un vaste escalier de pierre, qui monte en tournant un peu, de plus en plus étroit à mesure qu'il s'élève, vers les hautes voûtes parmi lesquelles il disparaît. (p. 98)

The background is determined by vanishing point perspective: the columns "s'estompent," becoming vaguer and more blurred as they are depicted as part of "des profonders," and the staircase narrows until it reaches the high vaults and then "disparaît." The columns are described as "cylindriques" directly indicating the volume that is only implied by the light source shining on the column in La Jalousie. In addition, the totality of the setting achieves depth by the use of the words "au-delà," which indicates the placement of objects in a three-dimensional space.

In the third paragraph of the story the abstract image of the red stain, emerges in the total context of the painting, as the injured breast of the woman lying in the foreground of the composition:

> Seul, au premier plan, luit faiblement le corps étendu, sur lequel s'étale la tache rouge -- un corps blanc dont se devine la matière pleine et souple, fragile sans doute, vulnérable. A côté du demi-globe ensanglanté, une autre rondeur identique, intacte celle-là, se présente au regard sous un angle à peine différent; mais la pointe aréolée qui le couronne, de teinte plus foncée, est ici tout à fait reconnaissable, alors que la première est presque entièreme détruite, ou masquée du moins par la blessure. (pp. 98-99)

In this paragraph Robbe-Grillet definitively indicates the external point of view on the painting; the second, more literal description of the woman's breasts suggests that the viewer has taken a step back from the artifact in question. In the first paragraph the breasts dominate as an abstract image, drawing attention to the fact that the eye is closely fixed on a particular detail which appears enlarged from this perspective. In the third paragraph, a greater distance from the painting enables the viewer to see the breasts as part of the female body. The contrast between the different vantage points on the image exemplifies Robbe-Grillet's statement in "Nature, humanisme, tragédie" that sight is a measure of distance which, falling on an isolated detail from too close by, can be deceptive or intrusive (p. 65).

While visual perception and visual composition are used in the first three paragraphs of "La Chambre secrète" to establish the setting on a picture plane, other aspects of Robbe-Grillet's visual technique demonstrate a provisional relationship with Gustave Moreau's real painting. The Follett-Larousse Concise Encyclopedia of Modern Art notes that:

> Moreau's public works . . . were almost all of literary subjects, portrayed imaginatively as if in a dream, where every detail seemed to be the symbol of some concept enriching the picture. This feature of his work aligned Moreau with so-called Symbolism and considerably influenced the Nabis.[38]

While there may not be any direct relationship between Moreau's symbolist painting and Robbe-Grillet's story, certain common characteristics do link his art with the descriptions in "La Chambre secrète." Moreau's use of detail is due in part to the Byzantine or Oriental influence on his art, characteristic of Symbolist painting. Philippe Jullian outlines the extent of the Byzantine influence:

> Moreau, alas, failed to depict a single Byzantine scene, but the mosaic-encrusted buildings in his paintings, the images dressed like archimandrites, the stylized flowers and the whole Greco-Oriental décor are worthy of Byzantium. Moreau is likewise very close to Byzantium when he freezes his figures in hieratical postures. Here he is following the principle of the 'Beauty of Inertia', according to Professor Praz, who quotes these lines by Moreau himself: 'All these figures seem frozen in a sleepwalker's gesture; they are unaware of the

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[38] Raymond Charmet, "Moreau, Gustave," Follett-Larousse Concise Encyclopedia of Modern Art, trans. William Hardie (Chicago: Follett Publishing, 1972), p.166.

> movement they are executing, sunk in reverie to the extent of appearing to be carried away towards other worlds.' The critic rightly comments on the contrast with Delacroix's dynamism, a contrast which is all the more striking when the two artists treat the same subject: the fight between Jacob and the Angel. Moreau's angel, motionless, his eyes fixed in a stare, his head encircled by a blazing halo, is completely Oriental, but the young wrestlers under the oak in the Saint-Sulpice fresco are pure Renaissance.[39]

In his story, Robbe-Grillet establishes an Oriental ambience on a backdrop which includes a floor covered in rugs with Oriental patterns, and cushions in lush colours of purple, brown, and blue. The motionless atmosphere of a Moreau painting is similar to the moment when the author freezes the victim and torturer in repeated passages, altering or enlarging upon the detail of the incidents taking place. Any sense of movement loses its force in the descriptive style of lines such as, "L'homme s'est éloigné déjà de quelques pas. Il est maintenant déjà sur les premières marches de l'escalier qu'il s'apprête à gravir" (pp. 101-102). The passé composé changes to the present tense, giving the impression that the action reaches its peak -- and then stops. Robbe-Grillet's use of instantaneity in the description (the momentary starting and stopping of an action, which changes slightly when it is repeated), may also be related to Moreau's tendency to paint sequences of the same person or event:

> When Huysmans saw The Apparition as the sequel to the episode of Salome dancing before Herod, he had

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[39] Phillippe Jullian, Dreamers of Decadence: Symbolist Painters of the 1890's, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Praeger, 1971), pp.155-56.

> discovered one of Moreau's methods, which could modify the limitations of 'succession' as Ragnar von Holten has called it and it is described in Laocoön. When Moreau was obsessed by a subject, he would paint different moments of the story as it developed. Dynamism in the single painting did not interest Moreau, but in a series of paintings on the same subject it is introduced in an original manner, which not only shifts the position of the subject in time but also changes the point of view.[40]

José Pierre refers here to J.-K. Huysmans' À Rebours (1884), where the novelist describes Moreau's Salomé Dancing Before Herod (1876; Paris, Musée Gustave Moreau) and The Apparition (1876; Paris, Louvre).

To further elucidate Robbe-Grillet's visual technique, it could prove useful to compare the descriptions by the two novelists, of a Moreau work of art: Huysmans' symbolist and decadent description of a real painting and Robbe-Grillet's post-modernist creation and description of an imaginary one. Huysmans' description of Salomé Dancing Before Herod is detailed and vivid, consistent with the atmosphere Moreau creates:

> Un trône se dressait, pareil au maître-autel d'une cathédrale, sous d'innombrables voûtes jaillissant de colonnes trapues ainsi que des piliers romans, émaillées de briques polychrômes, serties de mosaïques, incrustées de lapis et de sardoines, dans un palais semblable à une basilique d'une architecture tout à la fois musulmane et byzantine.
>
> Au centre du tabernacle surmontant l'autel précédé de marches en forme de demi-vasques, le Tétrarque Hérode était assis, coiffé d'une tiare, les jambes rapprochées, les mains sur les genoux.
>
> La figure était jaune, parcheminée, annelée de rides, décimée par l'âge; sa longue barbe flottait comme un nuage blanc sur les étoiles en pierreries

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[40] Jean Paladilhe and José Pierre, Gustave Moreau, trans. Bettina Wadia (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), p. 102.

> qui constellaient la robe d'orfroi plaquée sur sa poitrine.
>
> Autour de cette statue, immobile, figée dans une pose hiératique de dieu Hindou, des parfums brûlaient, dégorgeant des nuées de vapeurs que trouaient, de même que des yeux phosphorés de bêtes, les feux des pierres enchassées dans les parois du trône; puis la vapeur montait, se déroulait sous les arcades où la fumée bleue se mèlait à la poudre d'or des grands rayons de jour, tombés des dômes.
>
> Dans l'odeur perverse des parfums, dans l'atmosphére surchauffée de cette église, Salomé, le bras gauche étendu, en un geste de commandement, le bras droit replié, tenant à la hauteur du visage, un grand lotus, s'avance lentement sur les pointes, aux accords d'une guitare dont une femme accroupie pince les cordes.
>
> La face recueillie, solennelle, presque auguste, elle commence la lubrique danse qui doit réveiller les sens assoupis du vieil Hérode; ses seins ondulent et, au frottement de ses colliers qui tourbillonnent, leurs bouts se dressent; sur la moiteur de sa peau les diamants, attachés, scintillent; ses bracelets, ses ceintures, ses bagues, crachent des étincelles; sur sa robe triomphale, couturée de perles, ramagée d'argent, lamée d'or, la cuirasse des orfèvreries dont chaque maille est une pierre, entre en combustion, croise des serpenteaux de feu, grouille sur la chair mate, sur la peau rose thé, ainsi que des insectes splendides aux élytres éblouissants, marbrés de carmin, ponctués de jaune aurore, diaprés de blue d'acier, tigrés de vert paon.[41]

The voice in Huysmans' description of the painting is that of the omniscient narrator reporting on the image as it is seen by his hero Des Esseintes. In Robbe-Grillet's story, we do not know who is looking at the painting other than that it is an "oeil qui regarde."

To overcome the static nature of the description in Huysmans' novel, one would have to read on to the description of the sequel, The Apparition. Even then, the actual verbal description is motionless, not instantaneous as in the Robbe-Grillet text, where the image changes momentarily according to the viewpoint or to the imagination of the viewer. Whereas Robbe-Grillet's columns serve to define volume and perspective, in the passage from Huysmans the detailed ornamentation of the columns is important, not their rule in defining space. Huysmans encompasses in his novel almost the totality of the objects and details in the painting, bringing them to life, rather than retreating to their role in a pictorial composition. To the symbolist author the face of Salomé is imbued with expression and feeling, "recueillie, solennelle, presque auguste," while the face of the victim in Robbe-Grillet's story stays depersonalized even under torture, "les yeux noirs au fard savant s'agrandissent de façon démesurée, la bouche s'ouvre encore plus, la tête va de droite et de gauche, avec violence . . . pour à la fin retomber en arrière et s'immobiliser, dans la masse des cheveux noirs répandus sur le velours" (p. 108). The carefully made up eyes of Robbe-Grillet's character are in accordance with the mechanical artificiality of her movements under torture, the sense that the sado-eroticism is being practiced on a doll, not a real woman. She is at least at one remove from reality, while Huysmans, in describing Moreau's Salomé, conjures up the full impact of her human eroticism, both in her person and in her effect on Herod, imbuing the painting with its full, imaginative consequences. Imagination, which is also the structuring principle of "La Chambre secrète," acts differently in Robbe-Grillet's writing; it increases awareness of the self-conscious nature of the text, whereas in À Rebours imagination helps present the illusion of reality. The emphasis on the existence of the picture plane in the contemporary work points to the acknowledgement of an artificial visual image and the fonction créatrice of the text. Robbe-Grillet invokes the painted image, created and destroyed by repetition and ambiguity, as the factor which enables this function to take place.

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[41] Jean-Karl Huysmans, À Rebours (Paris: Bibliothéque Charpentier, 1912), pp. 71-72.

Whatever the difference with Huysmans' mode of description, Robbe-Grillet's short story exhibits a "sensibilité," on three levels, similar to that found in Moreau's painting: eroticism in an Oriental ambience, repetitive instantaneity, or "dynamism" occurring in a broken sequence, and shifts in viewpoint on the visual image. In view of Robbe-Grillet's dedication, such comparisons with Moreau's style of painting are almost inevitable. But the textural function of visual artifacts in Robbe-Grillet's fiction differs from novel to novel, and as part of his visual technique they are not always related to work by a particular painter. In Les Gommes a painting hangs in Professor Dupont's house above the sixteenth step (p. 20), an image that is related to the tarot card "La Maison de Dieu," and to the Oedipal aspect of the story, as Bruce Morrissette points out.[42] The painting is mentioned four times in the novel (pp. 14, 30, 140, 235), providing a reference point for Robbe-Grillet's use of the Oedipal legend. The descriptive technique is not instantaneous and visual, but a verbal depiction of a painted image:

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[42] Morrissette, The Novels of Robbe-Grillet, pp.57-60.

> Au-dessus de la seizième marche, un petit tableau est accroché au mur, à hauteur du regard. C'est un paysage romantique représentant une nuit d'orage: un éclair illumine les ruines d'une tour; à son pied on distingue deux hommes couchés, endormis malgré le vacarme; ou bien foudroyés? Peut-être tombés du haut de la tour. Le cadre est en bois sculpté et doré; l'ensemble paraît de facture assez ancienne. (p. 14)

This paragraph is not constructed visually so as to suggest a composition on a picture plane; it is part of the surface, narrative structure of the text, not the deep structure of fonction créatrice.

The visual artifact or image in Les Gommes which calls the most attention to the nature of visual construction, particularly through the juxtaposition of different levels of visual illusion, is that of the painter at his easel. In the first instance, a shop window displays a dummy at work painting:

> . . . elle représente un "artiste" en train de dessiner "d'après nature". Un mannequin, vêtu d'une salopette toute maculée de peinture et dont le visage disparaît sous une vaste barbe "à la bohême", est en plein travail devant son chevalet; prenant un peu de recul pour embrasser du regard à la fois son oeuvre et le modèle, il met la dernière main à un paysage au crayon d'une grande finesse -- qui doit être en réalité quelque copie de maître. C'est une colline où s'élèvent, au milieu des cyprès, les ruines d'un temple grec; au premier plan des fragments de colonnes gisent çà et là; au loin, dans la vallée, apparaît une ville entière avec ses arcs de triomphe et ses palais -- traités, malgré la distance et l'entassement des constructions, avec un rare souci de détail. Mais devant l'homme, au lieu de la campagne hellénique, se dresse en guise de décor un immense tirage photographique d'un carrefour de ville, au vingtième siècle. La qualité

> de cette image et sa disposition habile confèrent au panorama une réalité d'autant plus frappante qu'il est la négation du dessin censé le reproduire . . . . (p. 121)

The iconography of the image, the Greek countryside, is another example of the relation of the visual artifact to the novel's Oedipal theme. The description is also a comment on the nature of reality, of man's subjectivity and objectivity, the place of the painting and easel relating iconographically and intellectually to the concept expressed by Magritte in the modern, archetypal painting about a painting, La Condition humaine (1934; Paris, Private Collection). This work shows a room in which stands a landscape painting on an easel in front of a window, outside of which appears the same setting depicted in the painting. Magritte's own commentary on La Condition humaine, written in 1940, follows:

> The problem of the window gave rise to La Condition humaine (The Human Condition). In front of a window seen from inside a room, I placed a painting representing exactly that portion of the landscape covered by the painting. Thus, the tree in the picture hid the tree behind it, outside the room. For the spectator, it was both inside the room within the painting and outside in the real landscape. This is how we see the world. We see it outside ourselves, and at the same time we only have a representation of it in ourselves. In the same way we sometimes situate in the past that which is happening in the present. Time and space thus lose the vulgar meaning that only daily experience takes into account.[43]

Robbe-Grillet's description of the dummy painter in the window expounds in greater detail upon Magritte's notion of how we see the world as represented within ourselves, in correlation with the fact that the window display is an interior, not an exterior.[44] Several visual levels of the inner representation of reality appear in the shop window, the most general being the totality of the exhibit as representation. Within that representation is a dummy representing an artist, and within the artist's mind is the representation of what he sees. This is externalized as a landscape painting which he apparently perceives when looking at the photograph of the city, that is itself only a representation of a city, not the real thing. The reader is also reminded that the landscape is the copy of a master. In no instance does the visual aspect of the description refer to external or outer reality, except as a reproduction, with one exception. The introduction to the passage establishes an inner-outer relationship when the display is framed by the gleaming, commercial shop-front, "La devanture -- matière plastique et aluminium -- est flambant neuve et, si la vitrine de gauche n'est qu'une exposition assez banale de stylos, papier à lettres et cahiers d'écolier, celle de droite par contre est chargée d'attirer l'attention des badauds" (p. 121). But once having established this frame,

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[43] Harry Torczyner, Magritte: Ideas and Images, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Harry Abrams, 1977), p. 156; quoted from René Magritte, La Ligne de vie II, February 1940.

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[44] The term "correlation" is used here, and throughtout the text, as defined by Bruce Morrissette in relation to Robbe-Grillet's novels, "the doctrine that things or objects may also serve as 'supports' or objective correlatives of human emotions." I have extended the meaning of the term to include human thought as well as emotion; The Novels of Robbe-Grillet, p. 26.

Robbe-Grillet concentrates on the multifaceted complexity of "inner" representation and visual reproduction. Thus he calls attention to the predominant subjectivity of man's relationship to external objects, the different levels of visual reproduction providing a convenient device for conveying this idea.

A later passage uses both visual representation and perception to make a statement about man's subjectivity:

> Les ruines de Thèbes.
>
> Sur une colline qui domine la ville, un peintre du dimanche a posé son chevalet, a l'ombre des cyprès, entre les tronçons de colonne épars. Il peint avec application, les yeux reportés à chaque instant sur le modèle; d'un pinceau très fin il précise maints détails qu'on remarque à peine à l'oeil nu, mais qui prennent, reproduits sur l'image, une surprenante intensité. Il doit avoir une vue très perçante. On pourrait compter les pierres qui forment le bord du quai, les briques du pignon, et jusqu'aux ardoises du toit. Au coin de la grille, les feuilles des fusains luisent au soleil, qui en accuse quelques contours. Par derrière, un arbuste dépasse au-dessus de la haie, un arbuste dénudé dont chaque branchette est marquée d'un trait brillant, du côté de la lumière, et d'un trait noir du côté de l'ombre. Le cliché a été pris en hiver, par une journée exceptionnellement claire. (pp. 167-68)

The artist in this section paints details which are scarcely visible to the naked eye which given the distance that intervenes would normally be scarcely perceptible, magnifying certain elements the way the view in the penholder, in the Roussel poem, disproportionately enlarges some details. This suggests a form of visual perception where memory, or previous knowledge, often unwittingly fills in aspects of a setting which are not visible in a strictly optical sense. Robbe-Grillet also refers here to the extreme use of naturalistic detail in painting, to arrive at a realistic representation which is unrelated to the reality of perception. The eye "measures the distance," and reproduces them, but through the added filter of remembered, conceptual knowledge. If the existence of the picture plane was not implied in the preceding passage, Robbe-Grillet would not be able to expound upon the visual apprehension of reality in the painted image in this manner. The exaggerated, naturalistic detail, on a painted surface, acts in the same way as the multifaceted levels of reproduction in the earlier description; it emphasizes subjectivity, the representation of the world within ourselves which constitutes both the visual and verbal work of art. The second example, however, stresses perception rather than representation. That the painting eventually turns out to be a snapshot, is an extension of the technique in the first passage, a play on the different levels where reality may be reproduced.

The window display in Les Gommes comments on the subjectivity of man's relationship to the world and the objects it contains, and it is also integrated into the Oedipal theme of the novel, but it is not one of the basic structural elements out of which the text develops. In later novels such visual artifacts seem more integral to the work's structure. In Le Voyeur, the painting of the child kneeling at her prayers plays with the various levels of visual reproduction:

> Le lit, la table de chevet, le petit tapis rectangulaire, la coiffeuse à glace, étaient tous de modèles très courants, ainsi que le papier peint où de minuscules bouquets multicolores parsemaient un fond de teinte crème. Au-dessus du lit, un tableau à l'huile (ou une vulgaire reproduction, encadrée comme une toile de maître) figurait un coin de chambre tout à fait analogue: un lit bas, une table de chevet, une peau de mouton. A genoux sur celle-ci et tournée vers le lit, une petite fille en chemise de nuit est en train de faire sa prière, courbant la nuque et mains jointes. C'est le soir. La lampe éclaire, à quarante-cinq degrés, l'épaule droite et le cou de l'enfant.
>
> Sur la table de nuit, la lampe de chevet était allumée -- oubliée, puisqu'il faisait grand jour. La clarté venant du dehors, à peine tamisé par un simple rideau de voile, avait empêché Mathias de s'en rendre compte tout de suite; mais l'abat-jour tronconique était, sans erreur possible, illuminé de l'intérieur. Juste au-dessous brillait un petit objet rectangulaire de couleur bleue -- qui devait être un paquet de cigarettes. (pp. 67-68)

The variety in types of reproduction is not as extensive as in the first passage in Les Gommes, about the painting of Thebes. But the fact that this painting may be either an original or a copy of a masterpiece parallels the suggestion that the picture in Le Voyeur could be an oil painting or a vulgar reproduction "encadrée comme une toile de maître." There is a shift in emphasis in Le Voyeur: there the frame proclaims it might be a masterpiece, in Les Gommes the ambiguity rests in the painting itself. The iconographical presentation of inner and outer representation in Les Gommes, the depiction of Thebes, does not refer to an immediate and obvious context in the story, while the picture in Le Voyeur has a direct relationship with the objects surrounding it. The corner of the room shown in the painting, is similar to the one in which the painting is hung.

The resemblance between the settings in the novel and the painting creates a connection or "glissement" between the art work and the events in the novel, the basis for confusion or ambiguity. Soon after Mathias sees the painting he finds himself in a room resembling the one in which he views the painting:

> Il est au premier étage, debout dans l'étroit vestibule, devant la porte entrebâillée sur la chambre au carrelage noir et blanc. La fille est assise au bord du lit défait, ses pieds nus foulant la laine du tapis. Auprès d'elle, les draperies rouges bouleversées pendent jusqu'au sol.
>
> Il fait nuit. Seule est allumée la petite lampe sur la table de chevet. La scène, un long moment, demeure inanimée et silencieuse. (p. 77)

Mathias sees the girl forced to her knees by an unknown man, and although her posture, and the room, suggest the painting, this time she kneels on the tile floor rather than on a lambskin. The change in floor covering is not the only reason the status of the scene is uncertain. The girl who moves from sitting to kneeling should be real, but at the beginning of the description the scene is described as motionless and silent, suggesting the instantaneity which momentarily freezes the text into a visual image, and contradicting the girl's movement. The slippage or "glissement" between painting and story allows Robbe-Grillet to visually present the objective-subjective relationship between outer and inner reality, but differently from Les Gommes. There, the external object, the window display is not defined as part of Wallas' thought. In Le Voyeur it is impossible to ascertain which events or objects are real and which are projections of the imagination of the central character, Mathias. The relationship between the painting as inner representation, and the similar setting of outer reality, spills over into the context of the central, unexplained event in Le Voyeur, the rape and murder of a young girl, and Mathias' part in this incident. The picture is thus part of the deep structure of the novel which undergoes surface alterations and transformations. The artifact is found not only in the form of a painting, but also as the photograph of the young girl who is tortured and raped (pp. 83-86, 170-72).

The calendar photo in La Jalousie relates to the main event of this novel, which is implied and uncertain, as in Le Voyeur, but this time connected with suspicions of adultery rather than murder. A...'s husband suspects her of having committed adultery with Franck, on their visit to the port city, the photograph of which is reproduced on the calendar hanging in the bedroom. The photo depicts the boat the Cap Saint-Jean moored at a pier, an iconographical intertextuality with Le Voyeur. It is difficult to determine the visual status of this picture, due to the style of the first three paragraphs of the description. Introduced as a "motif qui figure sur le calendrier des postes," the details which follow could apply to a painting, or to a photograph:

> Le navire blanc, tout neuf, est à quai, contre la longue jetée qui -- partant de la marge inférieure -- s'avance en pointe vers le large. On ne distingue pas bien la structure de celle-ci: il s'agit

> vraisemblablement d'une charpente en bois (ou en fer) supportant une chaussée revêtue de goudron. Alors que la jetée se trouve presque au ras de l'eau, les flancs du navire se dressent à une grande hauteur au-dessus d'elle. Il se présente de face, montrant la ligne verticale de son étrave et les deux parois lisses, dont une seule est éclairée.
>
> Le navire et la jetée occupent le milieu de l'image, lui à gauche, elle à droite. Tout autour, la mer est semée de pirogues: il y en a huit qui sont nettement visibles et trois autres plus incertaines, dans le fond. Une embarcation moins fragile, munie d'une voile carrée que le vent gonfle, est sur le point de doubler l'extrémité du wharf. Sur celui-ci se presse une foule multicolore, près d'un amas de ballots entassés, en avant du navire.
>
> Un peu à l'écart, mais au premier plan tournant le dos à cette agitation et au grand bateau blanc qui la provoque, un personnage vêtu à l'européenne regarde, vers la partie droite de l'image, une sorte d'épave dont la masse imprécise flotte à quelques mètres de lui. La surface de l'eau est ondulée d'une faible houle, courte, régulière, qui arrive en direction de l'homme. L'épave, à demi soulevée par le flot, semble être un vieux vêtement, ou un sac vide. (pp. 155-157)

Although the first paragraph names and locates the objects in question, if isolated from what follows, the description is not necessarily styled as a pictorial composition.

Only with the positioning of the ship, pier, and surrounding canoes within the framework of a picture, "l'image," do the elements begin to emerge as part of a visual composition: the ship on the left, the pier on the right, with eight boats in the foreground, and three in the background. The indication in the first paragraph that one side of the ship is in the light, thus becomes a sign of a light source. The man in the foreground, separated from the crowd, is another source of intertextuality with Le Voyeur, where Mathias appears in such a position on the pier. This intertextuality serves the purpose of Robbe-Grillet's visual technique, but the relationship is dialectical, reinforcing differences rather than similarities. The setting in Le Voyeur is not depicted as part of a visual artifact, although it delineates pictorial composition within a narrative. The terms used to describe the pier in plane, perspective, and light source contribute to confusion and ambiguity about the image, but they do not separate this image from the story with a framing device. The description of the pier in Le Voyeur is too ambiguous visually to establish even provisional boundaries between the subjective and the objective; there is no interaction between the subjective, inner representation of a visual artifact and an outer reality. In the description of the window display in Les Gommes and the oil painting in Le Voyeur, not only is the visual object framed, it also serves as a frame itself, assuming the position of an inner representation of a reality in the same way the painting on the easel takes on this meaning in Magritte's work La Condition humaine. Understood in this way, the calendar picture in La Jalousie is an inner representation, a correlative of the subjective, inner reality of the husband, who imagines the activities of Franck and A... on their trip to the city.

Establishing an image as a visual artifact is not a guarantee of the absolute certainty of the inner reality with which it correlates, for the calendar image in La Jalousie is surrounded by ambiguity. The introductory paragraph says "on ne distingue pas bien la structure" on the pier, and towards the end of the description the position of the boat makes "ses superstructures . . . assez confuses" (p. 158). Within a context of reference to a visual artifact, ambiguity of perception assumes a significance which is different from the ambiguity outside of such a structure. In the depiction of a visual artifact, uncertainty produces an awareness of the problem of the interaction between the subjective and the objective; the finite nature of the picture plane, whether the visual object is framed or not, establishes the sense of a confinement which needs to be broken and, by implication, the acknowledgement that subjectivity, or "inner representation" needs to be flexible in its relations to outer reality. But without the conscious establishment of boundaries, which are lacking in the description of the pier, a nebulous but static situation is created, where no particular relationship can be formulated, either to the subjective or the objective. This problem relates to the existence of _Sicht_ as part of _Dasein_; the mode of Being-in-the-world is constructed by _Verstehen_ and the sighting of objects. Robbe-Grillet formulates _Sicht_, with the visual object, and uses it to expound upon _Dasein_.

However, in _La Jalousie_ he is also careful to take into account the problem of producing a visual image in a verbal text. He eventually mentions, in the fourth paragraph of the description, that the calendar image is a photograph: a plume of foam from a wave is "fixé en l'air par la photographie" (p. 157), the very same subject Robbe-Grillet calls one of "instantanéité" in his essay on Roussel, "la vague qui s'apprête à déferler" which is left "en suspens" (p. 76). Through the instantaneous, photographic image which transforms the verbal into the visual, Robbe-Grillet reinforces the existence of a visual style.

After the publication of La Jalousie in 1957, Robbe-Grillet revised the first pages of Un Régicide, including the description of a small oil painting hanging in the bedroom of Boris, the novel's central character. It is the only picture left to him, of many canvases he painted years earlier. When the painting appears in the text, Boris has just seen it in the mirror while shaving and turned around "pour le regarder à nouveau" (p. 18). At first the picture appears to be an abstraction:

> C'était rouge et brun violet, avec des traces mauves, grises, bleu sombre, çà et là. Une importante masse rouge attirait d'abord l'oeil, oblongue et teintée de nuances diverses allant du corail au brunâtre, avec une sorte d'incision longitudinale au milieu et des végétations presque noires, aux contours déchiquetés, tout autour; vers l'autre bord de la toile, des formes étirées, colonnes ou aiguilles, se multipliaient dans l'ombre, devenant plus colorées en approchant du centre et traversant la chose rouge de trois pointes bleues inégales. Ça ne représentait rien. Le rectangle avait été pendant longtemps accroché dans l'autre sens. (p. 18)

As it is stated that this image is a painting, figure and ground are automatically established due to the existence of marks on a picture plane, even if the picture seems to be nonrepresentational. Elements of pictorial composition enter into the image as mass and colour, rather than through representation: "Une importante masse rouge attirait d'abord l'oeil." The mass stands out because it is a large bright shape on a dark ground; an intensification in colour value is suggested by the juxtaposition of the light area against the dark. However, on close examination, abstraction begins to give way to a representation, apparently of female genitals, described in a manner which conforms to the tradition in painting: the red mass pierced by the longitudinal incision being the vulva, and the dark vegetation, the pubic hairs, while the "colonnes ou aiguilles" on the other side of the painting are phallic symbols.[41] The final comment on the image deliberately stresses its undefined nature, "Ça ne représentait rien. Le rectangle avait été pendant longtemps accroché dans l'autre sens." Whether abstraction or sexual image, it makes little difference which way it is hung.

The painting, seen as a sexual image, is consistent with recurring motifs and themes in Un Régicide. The dream-like island, inhabited only by farmers and fishermen, is unusual in that there are neither women dwellers nor human visitors, although the men periodically welcome to the island a type of siren or mermaid who provides them with female companionship, their return being eagerly anticipated each year. For the most part, however, "C'est le triste sort des hommes de notre île de vivre sans compagne. Cet air songeur, cette inquiétude qu'on voit sur leur visage sont les stigmates du célibat" (p. 101). But the sirens embody their hopes and dreams, dreams with images similar in shape to that in the painting, "J'ai rêvé d'une chose rouge, large comme la main, qui me regardait" (p. 25). In her article, Carolyn Durham suggests that "Robbe-Grillet's central character [Boris] invents multiple imaginary lives for himself,"[46] the isolated life on the island being one of them. However, the similarity between the picture on Boris' wall and the image in the dream of the first person narrator, who lives on the island, indicates that imagination is not the only point of connection between the two characters; the unconscious, as dream, plays a role as well. Ben Stoltzfus in his 1980 article on *Un Régicide*, appears to miss the import of the representational aspect of the painting, and the way it highlights the conscious and unconscious sexual themes in the novel:

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[41] The openly sexual nature of this image contrasts with the romantic tone of the description of the siren's visits to the men on the island, another clue that this is a revised portion of the text, closer to the overt sexual images in Robbe-Grillet's later novels.

> In 1949, *Un Régicide* was a long way from the sexual imagery . . . of the *nouveau, nouveau roman*. At that time Robbe-Grillet was concerned more with metaphysical ennui and the metaphors of language than he was with the imagery of the subconscious. Exteriorizing subconscious images will be a subsequent development in which he connects the imagery of man's inner world with the outer imagery of advertising, the funnies, sex magazines . . . .[47]

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[46] Durham, p. 155.

[47] Ben Stoltzfus, "*Un Régicide*: A Metaphorical Intrique," *French Forum*, 5 (1980), 282.

Sexual imagery, both in its unconscious form and as a visual artifact, is a motif in Un Régicide, foreshadowing as do other aspects of the book, Robbe-Grillet's use of the topic in his later work.[44] Boris' unconscious, which is linked with his subjectivity, appears as it is projected on the world, in the painted image; the provisional nature of his subjectivity which constitutes his Being-in-the-world is reflected back to him as the illusion of reality in the visual artifact. Between the longing for a real woman, the painted representation, and his dream, it is impossible to delineate a single "reality" or objectivity; just as the painting reflects Boris' fantasies, any objectivity will always reflect a subjectivity.

The painting in Un Régicide is related to a theme of the novel, the restricted and unusual sex life of the men on the island, but it does not participate in a descriptive fonction créatrice, due no doubt to the early stage in the evolution of Robbe-Grillet's fiction, most of the novel having been written in 1949, before the 1957 revised section that includes the painting. The way in which it is utilized in the narrative is closer to the employment of the window display and the painting of Thebes in Les Gommes, than to the manipulation of the oil painting in Le Voyeur, or the calendar photo in La Jalousie. In the latter two novels interaction between deep and surface structures takes place in the depiction of the visual artifact. In Dans le labyrinthe Robbe-Grillet's handling of this element marks a culmination in his stylistic approach: the movement "de création et de gommage." Renato Barilli declares that Dans le labyrinthe is the "premier entre les récits où tout point de vue devient lui-même une fonction de texte, pouvant se déplacer indifféremment d'un personnage à l'autre (du soldat au médecin et au pseudo-auteur)."[41] But Barilli does not mention that point of view, in many instances ambiguous, is related to the etching representing a tavern scene, entitled incongruously La Défaite de Reichenfels (p. 26). The opening sentences of the first, detailed description immediately place the status of the picture in doubt; it may be either an original or a reproduction, as with the painting of Thebes in Les Gommes, or the picture of the little girl in Le Voyeur. "Le tableau, dans son cadre de bois verni, représente une scène de cabaret. C'est une gravure en noir et blanc datant de l'autre siècle, ou une bonne reproduction" (p. 24). As usual in his novels, Robbe-Grillet expands and manipulates the problem created by the uncertain representative level, rather than attempting to resolve the difficulty. In the first descriptive passage the bartender, the customers at the bar and tables, the soldiers, the little boy, and the poster on the wall are all depicted, details which are developed or shuffled around in later sections where the etching overlaps with reality.

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[44] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Robbe-Grillet commenté par lui-même," Le Monde, 22 September 1978, pp. 17, 22; Jean Ricardou, "Par delà le réel et l'iréel," Médiations, 5 (1962), 17-25, 187.

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[41] Renato Barilli, "Nouveau roman: aboutissement du roman phénoménologique ou nouvelle aventure romanesque?" Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui, problèmes généraux, I, p. 115.

In contrast to the visual images in the earlier works that are described in relation to a picture plane, the terms delineating the appearance of the objects and the people in La Défaite de Reichenfels are similar to those that could be used to describe a stage set, immediately before the curtain rises. Groupings seem to be placed taking into consideration the point of view of a theatre audience, the room having three walls instead of four, and all activity is executed with due consideration to audience visibility. With the exception of the one paragraph depicting the three soldiers at the middle table, the delineation of the picture does not indicate the relation of objects to a picture plane. Instead, they are described in relation to the three walls of the room, although they are also supposedly within a varnished, wooden picture frame. The frock coated men at the bar are "debout dans des attitudes diverses" (p. 24), while "au centre du tableau, plusieurs groupes de buveurs sont assis autour de tables irregulièrement disposées, entassées plutôt, dans un espace insuffisant pour contenir à l'aise tant de monde" (p. 25). As it is used here, the word "tableau" could mean either a picture, or a theatrical scene, and most likely the latter sense is appropriate, as the style stresses the placement of the men, not the interaction of bodies as forms which would be appropriate to pictorial composition. Another grouping is "À l'extrême droite, une masse d'hommes, vêtus presque tous en ouvriers comme ceux qui sont assis aux tables, tournent le dos à ces derniers, se pressant les uns contre les autres pour apercevoir quelque affiche ou image placardée contre le mur" (p. 25). As with the middle class, frock-coated men at the bar, there is an emphasis in the latter passage on costuming; the clothes worn by the men create their mien as workers, like the characters at the tables, they are positioned in a setting, but not according to the formal relationships of a visual composition, and the same is true of the soldiers sitting at the small table.

Predictably unreliable, in the middle of describing the engraving in the style of a theatre set, Robbe-Grillet suddenly changes to a style appropriate to a picture:

> A mieux observer, l'isolement des trois soldats apparaît comme produit moins par l'espace minime qui se trouve entre eux et la foule que par la direction des regards alentour. Les silhouettes du fond ont toutes l'air de passer -- d'essayer plutôt, car le passage est malaisé -- pour se rendre sur la gauche du tableau . . . . (p. 27)

The soldiers are situated in a pictorial composition, as the glances of the crowd behind them determine the line followed by the viewer's eye towards the left of the picture. This time, the other group looking at the poster "regarde exclusivement vers le mur de droite" (p. 27), impressing upon the viewer a second line of vision towards the right of the picture. After the visual "lines" of the picture are drawn in this fashion, the entry of elements of pictorial composition into the description culminate in yet more detail about the position of the soldiers:

> Le contraste entre les trois soldats et la foule est encore accentué par une netteté de lignes, une précision, une minutie beaucoup plus marquées que pour les personnages placés sur le même plan. L'artiste les a représentés avec autant de soin dans le détail et presque autant de force dans le tracé que s'ils avaient été assis sur le devant de la scène. Mais la composition est si touffue que cela ne se remarque pas au premier abord. Le visage qui se présente de face, en particulier, a été fignolé d'une façon qui semble sans rapport avec le peu de sentiment dont il était chargé. Aucune pensée ne s'y devine. (p. 28)

The words "netteté de lignes" and "le tracé," as well as the term "composition," confirms that the descriptive style has switched from theatrical to pictorial. The over accumulation of detail in the face of the soldier, shown frontally, has a similar effect to the exaggerated naturalism of detail in the second painting of Thebes in Les Gommes, indicating an acquired and remembered knowledge of the face under study; this is suggested by detail that seems to be realistic in a visual representation, but which is really an amplification in relation to the rest of the setting or background. In the etching in Dans le labyrinthe the detail also serves to emphasize, by opposition, the lack of thought or feeling in the depiction of the soldier; detail is not necessarily a method of achieving veracity.

The etching of the tavern suddenly slides into reality when the bar empties around the soldier, and the bartender turns out most of the lamps (p. 29). The device of dimming the lamps (like the light going down on a stage set) at the end of the description of the tavern scene, juxtaposes theatrical illusion with visual illusion. The picture is not only "the point of departure for the novel," as Ben Stoltzfus believes, it also establishes two levels of illusion in the relationship between the etching and the rest of the text.[58] Not only a starting point, the visual image interacts with the rest of the novel to construct the text. Although the events in the story have other settings, they invariably are linked with, or return to, the activity in the bar. Through this connection, other actions are imbued with a theatricality which indicates a self-conscious manipulation, as in a stage play, rather than in real life. This artificiality serves as a reminder, that just as the visual artifacts in other novels are a reflexion of inner and subjective representation, the text in its entirety is a subjective transcription of reality.

The sense of frozen motion in two of the three passages delineating the bar scene as a painting is more intense than in the depiction of visual artifacts in the early novels (pp. 24-29, 109-10). Most simply, this is due to a description that, at one point, continues for several pages. In the first passage, the drinkers at the table are making extreme gestures "mais leurs mouvements comme leurs mimiques sont figés par le dessin, interrompus, arrêtés net en plein développement, ce qui en rend la signification également très incertaine" (p. 25). The contrast between stasis and movement is discernible in the suspended motion of the painting, for the difference in stance between the men drinking, and the soldiers is also noted, "trois soldats, assis à une table plus petite, l'avant-dernière vers le fond sur le côté droit, tranchent par leur immobilité et leur raideur avec les civils qui emplissent la salle" (p. 26). As in the theatrical mode of description, the double level of immobility establishes an intermedium between the verbal and the visual. On the level of the visual image stasis is found in the rigidity of the soldiers, in their posture; their immobility is part of the representation, as are the contrasting, volatile gestures of the workers. On the verbal level, the workers move, on a visual level their movement is suspended, due to the existence of the etching in the novel.

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[58] Ben F. Stoltzfus, Alain Robbe-Grillet and the New French Novel, Crosscurrents Modern Critiques (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), p. 89.

Instantaneity is more explicit in other passages about the painting, where stasis is compared to a photograph, "comme ceux d'une compagnie qu'un photographe a voulu prendre en pleine vie, mais que des nécessités techniques ont contraint de garder trop longtemps la pose" (p. 110). Here, the image is explicated and frozen verbally, not through the direct manipulation of a visual artifact. The pose for a photograph, held too long and ready to collapse, brings to the fore the aimlessness, the Nichts which underlies the repetition and revision of the bar scene in three elements: as the reproduction of reality in a painting, as the description of reality in a novel, and as the real bar, which is also provisional, a product of the author's imagination. The moment of motionlessness lasts too long and because of this it loses its place as part of an etching, and as part of the textual expression of a visual image:

> Un bras reste à moitié levé, une bouche entrouverte, une tête penchée à la renverse; mais la tension a succédé au movement, les traits se sont crispés, les membres raidis, le sourire est devenu rictus, l'élan a perdu son intention et son sens. Il ne subsiste plus, à leur place, que la démesure, et l'étrangeté, et la mort. (p. 110)

Beyond the author's, and the reader's, imaginary creation of the scene lies -- nothing. The aesthetic act which results in a novel or a picture is a way of ordering reality, or rather a manner of organizing around the Nichts which is the basis of man's Dasein; when the aesthetic form collapes, nothing is left, no solid and reliable objectivity. The visual structure of the artifact is related to Sicht in order to elucidate man's understanding.

In Robbe-Grillet's manipulation of the visual artifact, the ambiguity which appears to be a precursor of Nichts also materializes in the discrepancy between the title of the engraving La Défaite de Reichenfels and the scene actually depicted. Ben Stoltzfus takes it for granted that the title is appropriate, and Bruce Morrissette makes the same assumption: "The violent but frozen gestures of the crowd gathered about a poster can no doubt be explained by the title of the engraving itself: The Defeat of Reichenfels."[51] Because the ambiguous tone of the text validates various interpretations, Stoltzfus and Morrissette may be justified in their approach, but they fail completely to note that the etching is described as "datant de l'autre siècle" (p. 24), in other words it is unrelated to the novel's present tense, at least as it appears in the first detailed description. Glib suppositions are presumptuous, as knowledge of the title alone makes it possible to conjecture that the picture could show either a retreat from a battle in progress, or the disarray after a battle. Certainly the conclusion that the painting would show a bar scene is not inevitable, although this point is not raised in the critical literature on Dans le labyrinthe. Conventionally, it is possible to translate a visual image directly into words, but Robbe-Grillet deliberately obscures the rapport between the etching and the words, and avoids the redundancy dear to nineteenth century realistic novels.

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[51] Stoltzfus, Alain Robbe-Grillet, p. 89; Morrissette, The Novels of Robbe-Grillet, pp. 156-57.

The purpose in creating a discrepancy between a work of art and its title, is suggested in the method René Magritte used to formulate titles for his paintings. These titles were produced after the works were completed, and were frequently suggested by friends, a point about the Belgian artist's paintings that is noted by Robbe-Grillet in his interview with Claude Duverlie on La Belle Captive.[52] A.M. Hammacher notes that Magritte's development of titles subsequent to the image, means that the genesis of a painting is dissociated from experience, objects, events, transactions, and situations described in words. The result is that titles are not explanatory, and their significance lies in their relationship to the painted image. They exist separately and parallel to the paintings, thereby stressing the dual nature of the subjectivity-objectivity-subjectivity relationships:

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[52] Duverlie, p. 531.

> . . . by his titles . . . Magritte separated the names from the objects and made the observer of his work aware of the enormous gulf between the dominant convention of words and the true significance of things.[53]

Words in the titles of paintings are normally used in the belief that, in the light of the Cartesian dualism, things may be identified separately and objectively. The titles of Magritte's art works show that the true and subjective significance of objects is to be found in the image. It may be enhanced by a dialectical relationship with a title, but the title should not be an attempt to delineate and confine the image. Robbe-Grillet's technique, in ambiguously naming the etching of the tavern, foreshadows his verbal and visual play with the titles of Magritte's paintings in La Belle Captive and his use of the titles and images as textual generators. The ambiguous title for the picture in Dans le labyrinthe highlights the subjective choice made; subjectivity is related to the affirmation of Nichts, the only alternative to "la démesure, et l'étrangeté, et la mort" (p. 110).

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[53] A.M. Hammacher, René Magritte, trans. James Brockway, The Library of Great Painters (New York: Harry Abrams, 1973), p. 28.

As part of the deep structure of the novel, the use of the etching in Dans le labyrinthe is similar to the manipulation of the imaginary Moreau painting in "La Chambre secrète." To all intents and purposes neither the story nor the novel would exist without the infrastructure provided by the visual image. However, through another visual technique, the delineation of light source as independent of a particular, visual image, the Heideggerian concept of Sicht also becomes central to Dans le labyrinthe. We have seen how, in the description of the pier in Le Voyeur, an uncertain pictorial light source is the cause for metaphysical doubt, but the emphasis in this case is on the dubious nature of the source. Robbe-Grillet does use lighting in another manner, however, not primarily as part of the visual language which relates to a picture plane, but as a direct indication of existential uncertainty. In Un Régicide lighting serves to define a visual image:

> L'eau est maintenant d'un calme absolu. Sans profondeur à cet endroit, mais sans transparence. C'est une surface polie, nacrée, d'où émergent de grosses pierres aux formes arrondies, noirâtres, lisses elles-mêmes, dépourvues de tout goémon. L'éclairage sans contraste les prive également de relief. Leurs contours se doublent par en bas d'images inversées, ni plus ni moins précises, un peu plus luisantes peut-êtres, que l'on prendait facilement pour l'original. (p. 20)

Lighting here serves to flatten a visual surface, but light, in the water, may also be "l'intense lumière qui vient de cet autre monde" (p. 33), or on the island it becomes "l'éclairage . . . froid, triste, mais semble être plutôt celui de l'aube" (p. 78). Unlike the former passage, the latter two phrases indicate a light which is imbued with humanistic and metaphysical quality, not unlike the light in the metaphysical painting of Giorgio de Chirico, which is frequently described as being that of "another world." In the latter two quotations there are hints of existential uncertainty; light is more definitively related to feelings of doubt in Les Gommes:

> La nuit est maintenant presque complète. Les lumières que répandent d'insuffisants becs de gaz et quelques rares boutiques, n'arrivent à créer qu'une clarté douteuse et fragmentaire -- coupée de trous, plus ou moins largement frangés de zones de passage, où l'esprit hésite à s'aventurer. (p. 111)

The light creates the tentative feeling about the physical and mental environment, through fragmentary illumination, which is a reminder of those unknown areas "où l'esprit hésite à s'aventurer." In another passage from Les Gommes, light serves as a correlative to situate more precisely the spiritual aspect that is referred to:

> Cette maison lui a toujours paru sinistre. Les plafonds trop élevés, les boiseries sombres, les angles où s'accumulent des ténèbres que la lumière électrique ne parvient jamais à chasser, tout y est fait pour renforcer l'angoisse dont on est saisi dés l'entrée.
>
> Marchat, ce soir, remarque des détails qui jusqu'ici ne l'avaient pas frappé: portes qui grincent, perspectives inquiétantes, ombres inexplicables. (pp. 139-40)

"L'angoisse," or anxiety, is the dominant feeling, created in man as Nichts, and reinforced externally by the unfamiliar, hidden in the darkness and shadows. In Heidegger's philosophy, as William Barrett has noted, anxiety is the strange feeling of being afraid of nothing at all; nothingness or Nichts is the object of our anxiety and dread. In Les Gommes, Marchat feels this anxiety under particular light conditions, relating it to the optical sense, and thus to the Sicht of understanding.

The use of light to indicate existential uncertainty is even more pronounced in a later novel such as Dans le labyrinthe. Robbe-Grillet shows, at first, that the lamp in the narrator's room, and the streetlights, cast a very unsteady or unreliable light. The narrator's light, covered by a lampshade, seems to be incomplete, "Le abat-jour projette au plafond un cercle de lumière. Mais ce cercle n'est pas entier: un de ses bords se trouve coupé . . . par la paroi verticale" (p. 10-11). But later, the light cast by this lamp is described as a "vaste ronde de lumière" (p. 14), luminosity, and consequent powers of perception, seeming to increase at this point. The veracity of perception is questioned, however, when Robbe-Grillet describes the shadow cast by the fly that is crawling around the rim of the shade; on the ceiling there is "une ombre déformée, où ne se reconnait plus aucun élément de l'insecte initial" (p. 14). Transformed this way, the insect comes to resemble the shape of the filament in the electric lightbulb, which is in turn itself enlarged and distorted. The images of the fly and the electric filament are both contorted by the light source, although the author gives no particulars as to the original forms of the objects; he details only the shadowy distortions. The visual apprehension that takes place is not based on the source of the optical image, but on the deformed shadow thrown by the lamplight. What appears is a reflection of outer reality, the same type of reflection that governs inner representation and takes part in the creation of man's subjectivity. Light, which is customarily a symbol of certainty, becomes a correlative for doubt and distortion.

The subjective nature of perception is presented in the depiction of light and shadow cast by the lamp in the study; the streetlight, on the other hand, indicates the inefficacy of light rather than its ability to distort. This technique begins with the glissement between the appearance of the electric filament in the lamp and that of the streetlight, "C'est encore le même filament, celui d'une lampe identique ou à peine plus grosse, qui brille pour rien au carrefour des deux rues" (p. 16). The streetlight may not distort, but neither does it clarify the setting, instead "il brille pour rien." Still another aspect of perception, its relativity, is explicated in the reiterated depiction of a streetlight:

> . . . un réverbère est allumé, bien qu'il fasse encore jour. Mais la clarté douteuse, terne et diffuse, de ce paysage de neige permet à celle de l'ampoule électrique de s'imposer au premier regard: un peu plus brillante, un peu plus jaune, un peu mieux localisée. (pp. 21-22)

Illumination from the lamp is strong or weak according to its surroundings. Rudolf Arnheim discusses the problem of relative brightness in optical perception in his book Art and Visual Perception:

> The brightness we see depends, in a complex manner,

> on the distribution of light in the total situation . . . and on an object's physical capacity to absorb and reflect the light it receives.
>
> The physical capacity is called luminance or reflectance. It is a constant property of any surface. Depending on the strength of the illumination, an object will reflect more or less light, but its luminance, i.e., the percentage of light it throws back remains the same . . . .
>
> Perceptually, there is no way of distinguishing between reflecting power and illumination, since the eye receives only the resulting intensity of light but no information about the proportion in which the two components contribute to this result.[54]

The eye perceives light in accordance with the luminance of the object and the degree of reflectance, although in optical reception it is impossible to distinguish between the two elements. Thus observation is subject to their relativity. It is impossible to calculate the degree of luminance of the snow around the streetlight and the power of illumination of the light; it is only possible to see that the light glows brightly in relation to its surroundings. Whether the lumination cast by a light represents a distorted reflection of reality, an inability to light a setting, or the relativity of perception, in each case, light inhibits the acquirement of a full cognition of the situation.

The soldier reappears frequently, stationed under the streetlight, linking him to the function of the perception of light and to its ability to distort, both literally and metaphorically. Robbe-Grillet says of his use of metaphor, "A partir du moment où j'avais interdit la métaphore en général (c'est au moment de La Jalousie), ce qui m'intéressait, c'était justement de mettre en action des métaphores, ce qu'on a vu à partir du Labyrinthe."[55] In this novel the soldier frequently appears at the foot of the lamp post, forlorn and lost, seeking refuge from the surrounding darkness. His performance is part of a metaphor in action, the type of metaphor that, because it exists continuously throughout the novel, forms part of the deep structure. Near the light of the lamp, the soldier seems to be in a dilemma, seeking direction towards some unknown goal:

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[54] Rudolf Arnheim, Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 305.

> Il hésite encore un moment, regarde à nouveau devant lui, puis, derrière lui, le chemin qu'il vient de parcourir, jalonné par l'alignement des lampadaires électriques, dont les lumières de plus en plus rapprochées, de moins en moins brillantes, disparaissent vite dans la nuit brouillée. Puis il s'engage, sur sa droite, dans la rue perpendiculaire, déserte aussi, bordée de maisons identiques, où se succèdent, assez éloignés les uns des autres mais à intervalles réguliers, les mêmes lampadaires dont la clarté maigre illumine au passage la chute oblique des flocons. (pp. 31-32)

The soldier hesitates, looking for guiding marks, but all light dissipates in the dark night. A little later, the soldier asks the young boy for directions, but the child is unimpressed by one "qui ne sait pas lui-même où il va" (p. 35):

> "Où est-ce qu'on va, par là?" demande-t-il.
> Le gamin ne dit toujours rien. Ses yeux ont quitté le soldat pour se porter vers le bout de la rue, dans la direction que l'homme a indiquée d'un signe de tête; il y voit seulement la succession des lumières alignées, de plut en plus rapprochées, de moins en moins brillantes, qui se perdent dans la

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[55] Françoise van Rossum-Guyon, "Le Nouveau roman comme critique de roman: discussion," Nouveau roman: Hier, aujourd'hui, problèmes généraux, I, pp. 249-50.

> nuit.
> "Eh bien, tu as peur que je te mange?
> -- Non, dit l'enfant, j'ai pas peur.
> -- Alors, dis-moi où je vais, par là.
> -- Je ne sais pas", dit l'enfant. (p. 35)

When the soldier seeks guidance from something outside of himself, whether from a person (the child) or from objects (the streetsigns or "plaques"), he meets with a blank wall. He regards exterior elements in terms of the Cartesian dualism, not as part of his subjectivity, and try as he might he cannot make contact with this external objectivity; he is constantly confronted with the contradiction and confusion which marks Nichts. Towards the end of the novel he meets a middle class man in a fur coat, whom he believes may be a person he has been searching for, a man who stands in front of "un lampadaire de font, ancien bec de gaz aux ornements désuets, équipé maintenant d'une ampoule electrique, qui brille d'un éclat jaunâtre dans le jour terne" (p. 153). The soldier's attempts to speak to him are no more than "des balbutiements fragmentaires et contradictoires" (p. 153), and in their discussion of the man the soldier is supposed to meet, the soldier realizes that he contradicts himself with his own arguments. All of his effort is futile.

Through the correlation between the uncertainty and relativity of illumination and the aimless and meaningless actions of the soldier, it is evident that the soldier's hopeless quest is an active metaphor for the search for something, where there is actually nothing, a metaphor for the confrontation with Nichts. In Dans le labyrinthe the soldier faces, inevitably, nothingness and death in his empty and anxious search. Towards the end of the novel, the soldier lies wounded in a windowless room, cross-examined again by the merciless infant:

> "Tu vas mourir ici?" dit l'enfant.
> Le soldat ne connaît pas, non plus, la réponse à cette question-là. Il est du reste étonné qu'on la lui pose. Il va chercher à obtenir des explications; mais il n'est pas encore parvenu à formuler ses inquiétudes que déjà le gamin a fait demitour et s'éloigne à toutes jambes le long de la rue rectiligne . . . . (pp. 197-98)

The hopeless situation of the soldier is linked with "inquiétude," and the child's question relates to death; in this passage death and anxiety are paired. The soldier is facing what, in William Barrett's terms, is Heidegger's idea of "the void of non-Being [that] opens up within our own Being" (p. 226). Heidegger's notion of the relationship between dread and death, as expressed in the second part of Sein und Zeit, is explained by Marjorie Grene:

> Life in its entirety is life facing death. Of all moods dread only brings this knowledge, lifts human being out of its scurrying self-forgetfulness to the vision of its wholeness -- the knowledge of itself as being-to-death. Dread alone brings to human being its proper freedom, transforms the alien absurdities of stubborn fact into an essential possibility of being itself, in Heidegger's words, "set free from the illusions of the 'they' in passionate, self-assured, anxious freedom to death" (Sein und Zeit, p. 266).[56]

Yet Robbe-Grillet's soldier never reaches this condition of freedom, for on being confronted, by the little boy, with the anxiety of life which relates to death, he collapses. Faced with the revelation of nothingness, the soldier dies before he is able to assimilate all these ambiguities in an authentic life. Through the correlation of the optical sense of light with the futility of his actions leading up to this realization, the soldier's discovery is related to the *Sicht* of understanding.

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[56] Marjorie Grene, "Heidegger, Martin," The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1972), III, 460.

Thus far, it is apparent that in Robbe-Grillet's novels the use of light in visual technique is related both to the definition of a picture plane and to the *Sicht* of *Dasein*. In *Dans le labyrinthe* the various levels of ambiguity created around the tavern scene, indicate the *Nichts* of *Dasein*. Robbe-Grillet continues to use light to create uncertainty in *La Maison* and in *Projet*, as well as to define the picture plane. For example in *La Maison*, during the theatrical entertainment entitled "L'Appât," "un des grands chiens noirs de la maison [est] rendu plus gigantesque encore par un habile effet d'éclairage" (p. 31), light thus becoming an agent of illusion and ambiguity. In *Projet*, a contradiction exists between the real and the imaginary, in the image of a key on a table: "j'ai oublié ma clef à l'intérieur et je ne pourrai plus ouvrir la porte pour rentrer chez moi. C'est faux, comme toujours, mais l'image est toujours aussi forte et précise de la petite clef d'acier poli, demeurée sur le marbre de la console, dans le coin droit, près du bougeoir en cuivre" (p. 12). The confusion is detailed, in part, through the light that illuminates the key as it sits on the table:

> Sur le marbre, noir et terne, la petite clef se dessine en lignes claires avec la netteté d'un schéma de leçons de choses. Son anneau, plat, parfaitement circulaire, est situé à quelques centimètres seulement de la base hexagonale du bougeoir, etc., dont le corps mouluré (gorges, tores, cavets, doucines, scoties, etc.) supporte . . . etc. Le cuivre jaune brille dans la pénombre, du côté droit où un peu de lumière arrive du dehors, par l'ouverture grillée de la porte d'entrée. (pp. 12-13)

Firstly, the actual existence of the key on the table is in question -- it may be an image of the imagination. Secondly, even within this image, imaginary or real, the details of the description may be invented, the faint light making it impossible to see them. However, the light used in the depiction of the woman/mannequin immediately at the beginning of Projet is more relevant to pictorial definition than to existential doubt:

> De la partie gauche du cadre, descend un cône de lumière vive et crue, venant d'une lampe-projecteur à tige articulée dont le pied est fixé au coin d'un bureau de métal; le faisceau a été dirigé de façon précise, comme pour un interrogatoire, sur le corps aux courbes harmonieuses et à la chair couleur d'ambre qui gît sur le sol. (p. 9)

The lamp, as it is used here to frame an object in a particular setting, in this case the naked body of the woman, is a reminder that different qualities of light produce different images. In painting the distinction may be made between "light through" and "light on"; in light through "the light comes towards us off the painting; we receive it rather than observing its effects within the painting"; light on "implies luminosity from a specific source rather than an omnipresent metaphysical one."[57] Robbe-Grillet's description does not call upon the subtleties of tone and colour found in painting, but the light "vive et crue" is "dirigé de façon précise," making it "light on," and thus more related to formal, pictorial qualities and to chiaroscuro contrasts, than to existential doubt.

Visual artifacts also appear in La Maison and Projet, but though they are even more numerous and more various than in the earlier novels, they do not seem to be part of the deep structure. Instead, they function in a way similar to the image of the champagne glass and the petal in La Maison, they stay on the surface of the structure of repetition, transformation, and dissolution. Verbally, they are part of the text's surface structure, visually the image is flattened against the picture plane, a technique characteristic of some American pop art.[58] Rather than looking at the objects in these novels as part of

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[57] Christopher Cornford, "The Language of Painting," p. 116.

[58] Lucy Lippard says "Pop is a hybrid, the product of two abstraction-dominated decades, and, as such, is the heir to an abstract rather than a figurative tradition. Pop Art has more in common with the American 'post-painterly abstraction' of Ellsworth Kelly or Kenneth Noland than with contemporary realism." Lucy R. Lippard, ed., Pop Art (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 9. The painting of Noland has been described in the following manner: "Traditional pictures invite the eye to penetrate their interiors, and to oscillate between surface and illusory depth. In contrast the flatter images of . . . Noland obliged the eye to skid laterally across the surface," John A. Walker, Art Since Pop, Barron's Educational Series (New York: Barron's, 1978), p. 8.

Robbe-Grillet's visual technique, which has already been discussed extensively, it would seem most valuable to look at them in relation to actual pop art paintings, in another chapter devoted to this aspect of his fiction.

Robbe-Grillet's visual method in his early novels involves three basic techniques: the use of different facets of visual perception, the exploitation of the language of painting and drawing, and the depiction of visual artifacts, which in some cases relate to the "sensibilité" of a type of art or a certain artist. All three employ the instantaneous moment which is essential to construction of a visual image in the verbal format; in many instances the visual language of light is related to the *Nichts*, the core of Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*, light, on one level, contributing to a philosophical conceptualization. The evolution of these techniques, and the images which contribute to them, is indebted both to their development in individual novels, and to intertextual relationships.

# IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VERBAL AND VISUAL ASPECTS OF SURREALISM IN ROBBE-GRILLET'S FICTIONAL CONCEPTS

The discussion of visual technique in Robbe-Grillet's novels has established that the use of visual artifact and representation in Les Gommes relates in a limited but significant way iconographically and intellectually to René Magritte's surrealist painting La Condition humaine, a connection supported by the author's acknowledgement that surrealism, and Magritte, have greatly influenced his work. Before a further analysis of the relationship of certain surrealist paintings to his novels, however, it is both useful and necessary to distinguish and define particular similarities and differences between his ideas and those of the surrealists, especially as they are expressed in his essays on Raymond Roussel and Joë Bousquet, and as they are delineated in the critical literature on Robbe-Grillet. Since Robbe-Grillet's first essay on a surrealist writer, Joë Bousquet, was published in 1953, it is valid to suggest that surrealist notions could have affected the form and content of his early novels, consciously or unconsciously. The article on Bousquet offers clues to Robbe-Grillet's surrealist affinities, when he analyses Bousquet's notions about the situation of the writer or artist. Crippled in 1918, due to the war, Bousquet became completely immobilized, and consecrated his life to literature, developing contacts within the surrealist group and signing several of their tracts and declarations. Because of his physical disability, Robbe-Grillet suggests, Bousquet had to learn to construct the world around himself, "Le monde sensible qui l'entoure n'est plus, comme le rêve ou le souvenir, que la matière à laquelle il doit prêter son imagination pour la sauver du néant."[1] Robbe-Grillet refers to passages in Bousquet's Le Meneur de lune (1946)[2] to exemplify the part childhood memory plays in constructing such an imaginary world:

> Ce sont d'abord les souvenirs de jeunesse qui se recomposent en décors et événements débarrassés de leur halo, modelés désormais dans une pâte moins fragile. L'opération n'a rien d'appauvrissant, au contraire; ce n'est pas une maquette schématique qui se substitue à une réalité trop complexe; ce sont vraiment la pierre et l'eau que ce travail "édifie et désenlise." (p. 84)

The youthful memories which appear, in the text, in a clearer, stronger form are not, according to Robbe-Grillet, actually reconstituted by Bousquet but appear for the first time. The construction of this world, and the objects in it, "leur brillant, leur qualité 'de cohérence et de densité immuable' n'appartiennent qu'à un monde nouveau" (p. 84). In Bousquet's discussion of the creative process, Robbe-Grillet analyses the functioning of the imagination as a type of altered perception. Literature is thus freed from the duty of transcribing and reporting what is known as the real world, so that the self-conscious process of creation is highlighted. Much later, in an autobiographical fragment published in 1981, Robbe-Grillet affirms the imaginative context of memory in his own writing. After describing an encounter with the invented character Henri de Corinthe, who is in fact conjured up in a tale told by Robbe-Grillet's father, Robbe-Grillet concludes "Le passage qui précède doit être entièrement inventé."[3] He acknowledges the major role of imagination in the literary organization of his boyhood memories, his own production of "un monde nouveau."

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[1] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Joë Bousquet le rêveur," Pour un nouveau roman, p. 83. All further references are to this edition of the essay and appear in the text.

[2] Joë Bousquet, Le Meneur de lune, Dessins originaux de Jean Cambersque (Paris: J.-B. Janin, 1946).

This technique exemplifies Robbe-Grillet's divergence from one of the basic principles of surrealist literature. In his study of dada and surrealism C.W.E. Bigsby says:

> . . . surrealism, which showed a consistent contempt for "literature," was not concerned with refining literary techniques or forging new forms of art, but with tapping the resources of the subconscious and liberating the captive spirit. The striking image was not, as it was for the romantics and symbolists, a conscious literary gesture, a means of conveying a fixed meaning or mood. It, and the bewildering flow of automatic writing in which it occurred, was an attempt to by-pass what the surrealists saw as the conventional timidity of art and the restrictive rationality of bourgeois society.[4]

Robbe-Grillet is not engaged in a battle against the restrictive nature of bourgeois society, but rather with the limitations of a literary form. His concern with the self-reflexive creative process of fiction is far removed from the primary intent of the surrealists, the liberation of the subconscious, for which the literary form was only a vehicle. In Bousquet's work, therefore, he analyses the facets which are most relevant and applicable to developments in contemporary fiction and the nouveau roman, the interaction of memory and imagination, which produces an original conception.

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[3] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Fragments pour une autobiographie imaginaire," Nota Bene, No. 2/3 (Summer, 1981), pp. 9-20.

[4] C.W.E. Bigsby, Dada and Surrealism, The Critical Idiom, No. 23 (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 62. All further references are to this edition of the book and appear in the text.

The reconstructions of memory in Bousquet exemplify the creative, literary process through the development of an original perspective on the past, but Robbe-Grillet notes also that there are two other situations in which an exceptional viewpoint may be achieved. One such circumstance is a certain form of isolation, defined by Bousquet:

> . . . la création est au contraire inséparable de l'emprisonnement -- dont l'orne d'ailleurs volontiers l'imagerie populaire: le poète dans sa tour d'ivoire, Sade dans son cachot, Marcel Proust dans sa chambre capitonnée de liège. On a voulu souvent limiter cette prison à une certaine qualité de solitude, presque toujours entendue comme solitude par rapport aux hommes. Il faut y voir quelque chose de plus, et même quelque chose de très différent quant à la portée: non seulement un isolement plus grave qui éloigne de façon tout aussi radicale les objets et les décors, mais encore cette dimension nouvelle apportée par l'interdiction de s'en rapprocher. (p. 85)

While he approves of Bousquet's interpretation and manipulation of solitude as accession to a creative frame that does not testify or transcribe, he qualifies this approach in his introductory note to Projet:

> . . . Bâtir un roman est une activité solitaire, mais non pas innocente ni coupée du reste de l'univers. Chaque société, chaque époque a vu s'épanouir une forme romanesque qui, en fait, définissait un ordre, c'est-à-dire une façon

> particulière de penser le monde, et d'y vivre. (p. 4)

Robbe-Grillet places Bousquet's definition of isolation as creation, within the context of a particular society and time. An unusual perspective may be achieved through "le faux sommeil du rêve" (p. 86) and, according to Robbe-Grillet, Bousquet was one of the first to indicate "le secret [de] cet univers du rêve," the revelation of the dream. In the dream, objects are restored to their rightful place as signs, not humanized and assimilated as in life. They are things in themselves whose meaning has not yet been revealed and that, more importantly, can now be revealed because they may be seen in an authentic light:

> Chacun a pu éprouver -- souvent même sans y attacher d'importance -la netteté anormale avec laquelle apparaissent, dans les rêves les plus anodins, une chaise, un caillou, une main, la chute d'un débris quelconque (qui laisse cette impression bizarre qu'elle va de nouveau se reproduire, aussi souvent qu'on le voudra, comme si le fragment détaché s'était éternisé à l'état de chute), ou, exactement de la même façon, deux ou trois mots (prononcés par on ne sait plus qui) dont l'image est restée dans l'esprit avec autant de précision que s'ils avaient été gravés sur un écriteau à un croisement de routes. (p. 87)

Part of a discussion of Bousquet's surrealist perspective on the dream, this statement also encompasses instantaneity and the frozen image and, therefore, relates to visual apprehension in literature.

Robbe-Grillet's essays on literature do not indicate an approval of literary techniques resembling surrealist methods of dream narration. This surrealist practice, prominent in 1924, in such publications as Louis Aragon's

Une Vague de rêves[5] and the December issue of La Révolution surréaliste,[6] consecrated to dreams, followed Freudian methods. Dreams were narrated and written down, but unfortunately Breton's belief in the superior reality of the dream did not convert well into aesthetic practice, as Bigsby notes:

> . . . as a method of subverting rational control, this technique proved disappointing. Faulty memory, itself perhaps a form of censorship, together with the inevitable imposition of form and structure on visions whose essence lay in their irrationality, meant that dreams recollected in tranquillity often lacked precisely that quality which made them valuable. (p. 70)

The irreconcilability between the "sleeping dream," and the literary form intended to convey it, is taken into consideration by Robbe-Grillet in his analysis of Bousquet's writing. Because he is most interested in those techniques of surrealism which can be useful in building a "nouveau roman," it is important to Robbe-Grillet that Bousquet goes beyond certain surrealist principles in discussing the waking dream: "le rêve dont nous parle Bousquet n'est pas tout à fait celui de nos nuits agitées" (p. 88). Instead, Robbe-Grillet believes, Bousquet refers to another type of dream:

> Comme nous le pressentions, ce rêve éveillé pourrait simplement être l'art, dont le sommeil il est vrai livre quelquefois des lambeaux, mais que seule une activité consciente nous permet de rassembler. (p. 88)

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[5] Louis Aragon, Une Vague de rêves (Paris: privately printed, 1924).

[6] La Révolution surréaliste, No. 1 (December 1, 1924).

This passage indicates the distinction in Bousquet's writing between images of the "sleeping dream" or "false sleep," and the dream images which may help create a contemporary fiction, a work of art. The reason that the waking dream is useful aesthetically is that it provides a self-conscious perspective, as Robbe-Grillet comments:

> Peut-être le rêve sera-t-il donc d'un plus grand secours encore pour ces "amis," qui sont debout et qui marchent, s'ils savent tirer profit de la vue d'immobile qui leur est ainsi prêtée; et en définitive c'est pour la même tâche, l'interprétation du même univers, ou plutôt sa création, qu'il servira à eux comme à lui. "Ce ne serait, avoue-t-il, qu'un jeu absurde de regarder mes rêves si je ne suivais pas sur les objets du jour l'impression qu'ils m'avaient donnée." (p. 89)

The invalid in his room, man in his everyday life, and the artist working on a work of art, all can be served by the viewpoint of the waking dream, whose immobility also relates to the "frozen moment" of the visual. Bousquet's concept of the dream does provide, therefore, a basis for a literary structure or form, unlike the surrealist dream narration. But in Robbe-Grillet's opinion Bousquet's dream goes even further than that; it is "le 'pressentiment' de ce que sera le monde réel quand notre esprit aura donné sa forme définitive à la matière" (p. 89). Robbe-Grillet's analysis of Bousquet's surrealism thus comes full circle, returning dreams to their relevance to the real world and their subversion of bourgeois society, but, in the meantime, finding in Bousquet's work a signpost directing a contemporary novelist to a new literary form. Needless to mention, there are other works, and periods of literature, which could lead to similar reflections about the effect of dreams (such as Gérard de Nerval's writings, and romanticism). As the known catalyst in Robbe-Grillet's ideas, however, Bousquet's writings are important to the purposes of this study in their particular combination of dream with literary form.

Robbe-Grillet's approach to Bousquet's surrealist use of memory, imagination, and dream also relates to Heidegger's notion of Dasein. This is not surprising in view of what Ferdinand Alquié has to say about how Bousquet's ideas evolved towards the end of his life. Alquié points out that, at this time, Bousquet came under the influence of Jean Paulhan, who attempted to persuade him to give up his preoccupation with language and replace it with the problem of being.[7] Bousquet's idea of a language that must negate itself at each step (noted by Robbe-Grillet), under the influence of Paulhan, became an attempt to replace the names of objects, with the objects themselves as they partake of being. The doubts about Cartesianism which Alquié points out in Bousquet's thought, certainly relates to Robbe-Grillet's interest in Bousquet's use of language:

> The ethic of language explains . . . how at the end of his life Bousquet occupied himself almost exclusively with the work of Jean Paulhan. I believe also that his reserves with regard to Cartesian thought had their deeper source there. He did not fall into the error of those who see in that thought only the transparency of clear ideas; rather he was

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[7] Ferdinand Alquié, The Philosophy of Surrealism, trans. Bernard Waldorp (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965), p. 168. All further references are to this edition of the book and appear in the text.

> disquieted to see Descartes accord being to thought. (p. 171)

Bousquet indicates that knowledge of the being of objects is not necessarily dependent on thought. Alquié quotes Bousquet:

> "I do not think of describing objects. I put myself in front of them, until I am not regarding them, but they see me and invent in my eyes their own image which would put me to sleep at their feet." (p. 171)

The anti-Cartesianism at the basis of Bousquet's ideas suggests an additional reason why Robbe-Grillet would be interested in his writings, but it also further delineates the concept at the root of Bousquet's commentary on the dream object, that Robbe-Grillet finds so important. The object appears in the dream in an authentic perspective because it is, in that context, part of the subjectivity of man's field of being or Dasein. The similarities between Bousquet's ideas and Heidegger's thought, from a literary perspective are reinforced not only by the Alquié commentary, but also by the posthumous publication of Bousquet's book Les Capitales ou de Jean Duns Scot à Jean Paulhan(1955), which places Paulhan's ideas with those of a long line of anti-Cartesian thinkers.[9] In Bousquet's writing, and in Robbe-Grillet's notions about literature, the dream object is defined according to an anti-Cartesian philosophical stance, not as part of the irrational, surrealist dream narration. Literary form is to be constituted, in part, by a transposition of certain elements of Heideggerian philosophy to an aesthetic sphere, rather than as a direct adoption of surrealist techniques.

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[9] Joë Bousquet, Les Capitales; ou, De Jean Duns Scot à Jean Paulhan (Paris: Cercle du livre, 1955).

A close analysis of Robbe-Grillet's essay on Bousquet supports the contention of this relationship between the literature and the philosophy. Robbe-Grillet begins by couching his discussion of Bousquet's ideas of dream and memory, as tools of the imagination, in terms of the redemption of man's world from nothingness, "du néant" (p. 83). In the previous chapters we have seen that nothingness or Nichts is central to Heidegger's notion of being, an idea interpreted and developed by Robbe-Grillet through the use of visual technique in his novels. On Bousquet's use of the imagination to create a world from nothing, he says "Il n'est plus ici question d'insuffler après coup une conscience à des phénomènes ayant déjà leur vie propre: sans cette création, la matière ne saurait avoir aucune forme" (p. 83). Man is to be awoken to the true relationship between his consciousness and the external world: that the objects of that world are shaped by his consciousness. As Marjorie Grene says of Heidegger's interpretation of objects, "Things are for him no Cartesian res extensae, existing independently of us; they are 'stuff' (Zeug) for 'use' (Gebrauch), which are 'at hand' (zuhanden) for our 'handling' (hantieren)."[1] When Robbe-Grillet quotes Bousquet's precept "asservis-toi à l'existence des choses"

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[1] Majorie Grene, "Heidegger, Martin," The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1972), III, 459.

(p. 89), he also points to a connection between man and object, where the thing is zuhanden.

The type of imagination which extends to objects as Zuhanden, as interpreted in Robbe-Grillet's analysis of Bousquet's work, is not consistent with the literary form produced by the surrealist's experiments with the irrational in automatic writing, or with their recording of dreams and speeches made while in a trance. As Gaëtàn Picon says in his book on surrealism, the surrealists failed in these attempts to arrive at an appropriate literary form:

> Yet in the end hypnosis was given up and dream writing failed to provide the model for surrealist writing. For hypnosis and dreams, though they reveal the existence of the lode, cannot provide the tools and the means for prospecting it. Too close to madness and silence, incapable of yielding a decipherable record, they cannot themselves offer any substitute for writing and drawing and painting, which retain enough of conscious mastery and thought to keep the vision from being blotted out of memory.[18]

Arbitrary and eclectic automatisn is unrelated to the use of the imagination Robbe-Grillet finds in writings by Bousquet, where he emphasizes the self-conscious arrival at a structured, aesthetic form. It is this very self-consciousness which attracts Robbe-Grillet, for without it, objects remembered, dreamed, or imagined cannot be "ready-to-hand" as part of man's Dasein. Hidden behind the cloak of irrationality they are tools useful neither to the structure of life nor to the structure of literature. In his essay on Bousquet, Robbe-Grillet turns the surrealist insight about the object in bizarre and imaginary situations and juxtapositions, into the ability to create a new perspective on everyday objects and reality, rather than building a surreality. While still retaining the quality of the marvellous, objects may now be employed to build the carefully structured, visual sequence of perception that Robbe-Grillet uses in his *nouveau roman*.

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[18] Gaëtan Picon, Surrealists and Surrealism: 1919-1939, trans. James Emmons (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), p. 46.

Raymond Roussel's work is the subject of the second essay by Robbe-Grillet, which provides some clue as to where his particular interests in surrealism lie. Even though Roussel remained outside the surrealist group and its activities, they considered him a "friend," and supported his work. As we have seen in the first chapter, Robbe-Grillet is concerned with the role of sight as an imaginary sense in Roussel's work as well as its part in the frozen gesture or instantaneous image (as in the essay on Bousquet), and thereby with a literary presentation in which description may be transposed into visual apprehension. Robbe-Grillet summarizes Roussel's use of the image in the following manner:

> Un autre caractère frappant de ces images est ce que l'on pourrait appeler leur *instantanéité*. La vague qui s'apprête à déferler, l'enfant qui joue au cerceau sur la plage, ailleurs la statue d'un personnage en train d'accomplir un geste éloquent (même si le sens en est d'abord absent, à l'état de rébus), ou l'objet figuré à mi-chemin du sol et de la main qui vient de le lâcher, tout est donné comme en plein mouvement, mais figé au beau millieu de ce mouvement, immobilisé par la représentation qui laisse en suspens tous les gestes, chutes, déferlements, etc., les éternisant dans l'imminence de leur fin et les coupant de leur sens. (p. 76)

This type of imagery, in surrealist painting, is found in work by the group Uwe Schneede calls the "Verists of the Improbable." Discriminating between their art, and that of the other surrealist painters who utilized methods similar to those of automatic writing, he says:

> The idea of automatism and the idea of dream-painting -- which Breton proclaimed as late as 1938, in his Dictionnaire abrégé du Surréalisme, when he called for the "realistic reproduction of dream images" -- typify two distinctly different branches of Surrealism. About 1925, one branch consisted of those artists who worked with semiautomatic methods, influenced by literary procedure. The early Tanguy, Masson, and Miró belong in this group. On the other side we find, toward the end of the twenties, the Verists of the Improbable: Tanguy, Magritte, and Dali, whose influences had been De Chirico and the early Max Ernst.[11]

William Rubin's differentiation between the two forms of surrealist painting is even more precise:

> As Surrealist painting emerged in its heroic period -- between the first (1924) and the second (1929) manifestoes -- it bipolarized stylistically in accordance with the two Freudian essentials of its definition. Automatism (the draftsmanly counterpart of verbal free association) led to the "abstract" Surrealism of Miró and Masson, who worked improvisationally with primary biomorphic shapes in a shallow, Cubist-derived space. The "fixing" of dream-inspired images influenced the more academic illusionism of Magritte, Tanguy, and Dali. We tend to think of Miró and Masson primarily as painters (peintres), in the sense that the modernist tradition has defined painting; we think of the latter artists more as image makers (imagiers). The styles of all surrealist painters are situated on the continuum defined by these two poles. Those of Max Ernst -- the "compleat Surrealist" -- oscillated between them. Both kinds of painting were done virtually throughout the history of the movement, though the "abstract"-automatic vein dominated the pioneer years and the period of World War II. In

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[11] Uwe M. Schneede, Surrealism, trans. Maria Pelikan (New York: Abrams, 1974), p. 32.

between oneiric illusionism held sway.'[12]

The frozen images in Roussel, noted by Robbe-Grillet, can be related visually to those of the "verists" or the "imagiers." An abstraction is not instantaneous because it is impossible to define its past or to protect its future. Instantanéité depends firstly upon the fact that an object exists in a definite form; then it may be cut off from its accustomed Zuhandenheit in man's consciousness.

In the discussion of Roussel's use of mystery as a theme, and its corresponding opacity -- transparency -- opacity, Robbe-Grillet observes:

> Les issues dérobées, les souterrains faisant communiquer deux lieux sans rapports visibles, les révélations soudaines sur les dessous d'une filiation contestée, jalonnent ce monde rationaliste à l'image des romans noirs de la meilleure tradition, transformant un instant l'espace géométrique des situations et des dimensions en un nouveau Château des Pyrénées . . . Mais non, le mystère ici se contrôle san cesse trop bien. Non seulement ces énigmes sont exposées avec trop de clarté , analysées trop objectivement, et s'affirment trop comme énigmes, mais encore, au terme d'un discours plus ou moins long, leur solution sera découverte et démontée, et cette fois aussi avec la simplicité la plus grande, compte tenu de l'extrême complication des fils. Après avoir lu la description de la machine déroutante, nous avons droit à la description rigoureuse de son fonctionnement. Après le rébus vient toujours l'explication, et tout rentre dans l'ordre. (p. 72)

The painting by Magritte, mentioned here and reproduced in La Belle Captive, is entitled Le Chateau des Pyrénées (New York, Collection Harry Torczyner) and was painted in 1959. The name of the painting originates with the landscapes and subject of Ann Radcliffe's novel Mysteries of Udolpho (1794),[13] as Magritte indicates in a letter to the owner.[14] Robbe-Grillet may be referring, therefore, to the particular atmosphere of mystery evoked by both the novel and the painting. In the case of the painting, this would indicate his interest in the visual aspect of surrealism, which seems very likely, if only because the reference appears in the context of an essay on a surrealist author. Magritte's Le Chateau des Pyrénées depicts a castle on top of a rock, suspended in midair above a turbulent sea. The physicist Albert V. Baez says of the picture:

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[12] William S. Rubin, Dada and Surrealist Art (New York: Abrams, 1968), p. 150.

> By confronting us with a massive rock in midair -- something we know cannot happen -- we are somehow forced to wonder *why* doesn't the rock come plunging down into the sea? We know, of course, that it should. But *why* should it? . . . What fails to happen in the painting reminds us of the mystery of what actually does happen in the real world.
>
> Space, time, and matter are dramatized here in suspended animation. The force of gravity, which we dismiss as commonplace in our daily lives, becomes powerful and awesome here. We can step on an ordinary stone any day without giving it a second thought, but the stone in the painting is compelling. The artist has made it extraordinary. It reminds us that all stones are extraordinary . . . . it is a wonderful picture to remind us that the world of our senses, the world of stones and castle, of oceans, clouds and waves, is the world that we must study before we can comprehend the more subtle world of atoms and molecules of which the world of our senses is composed.[15]

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[13] Ann Radcliffe, Mysteries of Udolpho (1794; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

[14] "Letter from René Magritte to Harry Torczyner, 27 April 1959," Henry Torczyner, Magritte: Ideas and Images, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Abrams, 1977), p. 204.

[15] "Letter from Albert V. Baez to Harry Torczyner, 8 September 1963," Magritte: Ideas and Images, p. 154.

In reminding the viewer of the role of gravity in the painting, Baez's commentary brings the implication of the instantaneous or frozen image into the area of a scientific perspective on objects of the visual sense, an impossible accomplishment with an abstract form.

The intellectual effect achieved by the Magritte painting is dependent upon compositional factors, just as the frozen images in Robbe-Grillet's fictional texts rely on formal factors to produce both their visual and conceptual results. William Rubin points out that Magritte's paintings have a great aesthetic appeal, "the compositional breadth, the massive contrasts of solids and voids, the economy of means."[16] In Le Chateau, these aesthetic elements strengthen the reinterpretation of the force of gravity, paralleling a revision of viewpoint which could take place in our daily lives, lives to which we are bound as gravity binds us to the earth; they remind us that the forces which hold us within preconceived, Cartesian ideas about life are powerful ones. Magritte "sought an almost total prosaism in the things he represented,"[17] an artistic attachment which suggests the Alltäglichkeit of an authentic Dasein. Robbe-Grillet's analysis of Roussel's instantaneous image indicates a similar prosaism; for it shows that "de ce monde-ci, nous découvrons que nous ne pouvons plus sortir" (p. 76). Transcendence is impossible; "Tout est à l'arrêt, tout est en train de se reproduire, et l'enfant pour toujours tient son bâton levé au-dessus du cerceau qui s'incline, et l'écume de la vague immobile va retomber . . ." (p.76). Magritte's rock is a symbol of this dubious position of man, unsuccessful in his quest for transcendence, forever precariously poised on the brink. Even the mention of the wave in the essay on Roussel seems to integrate Robbe-Grillet's analysis with the turbulent sea, and the iconography of Magritte's painting, as well as the conceptual frame of reference.

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[16] William Rubin, Dada and Surrealist Art, p. 208.

[17] William Rubin, Dada and Surrealist Art, p. 198.

The relationship between Robbe-Grillet's statements about Roussel's use of the image and the iconography and conceptualization of Magritte's painting _Le Chateau des Pyrénées_ exemplifies, in part, the methods of this surrealist _imagier_, and how a particular branch of surrealist art may be related to the French writer's approach to fiction. The verist painters are concerned with intellectual precision, but although their work is not abstract, it utilizes an illusionistic combination of elements where the objects appear to be real. Their employment of the aspects of composition and the materials of painting is precise enough to escape the notion of automatism, which Robbe-Grillet bypasses in his examination of surrealist writers. Schneede points out that the verist branch of surrealist painting was profoundly influenced by, among other artists, Giorgio de Chirico. Robbe-Grillet's fictional publications of the 1970's clearly direct our attention to his interest in the paintings of Magritte and Delvaux, the two artists most deeply impressed by de Chirico's work. The link between surrealist verism, these three artists, and Robbe-Grillet's ideas about fiction, suggests that an examination of the more specific aspects of the relationship, as they are manifested in Robbe-Grillet's novels, could prove fruitful.

An analysis of the essay on Roussel should first be completed, however, in order to more fully grasp the general nature of Robbe-Grillet's interest in, and development of, surrealist concepts. The anecdotal gratuitousness of Roussel's mysteries, particularly in his dramas, which results from the evolution of opacity--transparency--opacity in his texts, may be described in two ways: "Là encore, c'est, ou bien le vide dramatique complet, ou bien le drame de panoplie avec tous ses accessoires conventionnels" (p. 73). Robbe-Grillet is stimulated by the central dramatic _vide_ in Roussel's dramas, rather than derisive of their other trivialities, as might be expected, in view of his own, fictional use of an empty centre of action in _Le Voyeur_ and _La Jalousie_. Roussel's dramas are thus another example for Robbe-Grillet of the _Nichts_ at the basis of _Dasein_, appearing in a particular literary form. An aesthetic based on the philosophy of _Nichts_, whether in Roussel or Robbe-Grillet, demonstrates the untruth which is always present at the basis of truth:

> [Man] is finite because the "not" -- negation -- penetrates the very core of his existence. And

> whence is this "not" derived? From Being itself. Man is finite because he lives and moves within a finite understanding of Being. This means, among other things, that human truth too is always penetrated by untruth.[18]

The results of such a philosophy, in Roussel's literary form, are riddles, codes, enigmas, and complexity; in Robbe-Grillet's fiction the consequences are instability, disintegration, reintegration, and fragmentation of all narrative aspects.

Most importantly for the discussion of Robbe-Grillet's outlook on Roussel's surrealism, the result of the untruth at the basis of truth demonstrated by Heidegger is the instantaneous image. At the root of the momentary, visual image within a verbal text, is the knowledge that behind the truth of one image, lie one or more other truths, constantly intruding with their own claim to validity. Thus Robbe-Grillet's notion of the glissement from one image to another, from one idea to another, in fiction, possibly indicates also the Heideggerian concept of Nichts, and the fact that in the face of nothingness no truth is stable or ultimate. Related to the analysis of the aesthetic function of the imagination and the methods of memory, dream, and isolation (in Bousquet's or Roussel's writings), the philosophical concept of truth penetrated by untruth, is an instrument which allows the writer to unearth various, simultaneous imaginative levels and transpose them into fictional form. This idea of truth is also part of Sicht and becomes a motivating factor of the literary form on a pictorial level, through visual apprehension. As we have seen in the first chapter, words or language, when substituted for visual images, distance man from his experience. Robbe-Grillet's development of a fiction of visual apprehension is an attempt to regain the perspective invoked by close contact between man and his experience. In order to escape the falsehood imposed by a single social structure, or a single, preconditioned viewpoint, maintained as absolute truth, man must reintegrate himself with the manifold richness of life, that appears in Heidegger's philosophy as the finitude of understanding which acknowledges that truth is always penetrated by untruth. *Nichts*, and the instability of truth, is both produced and enhanced in the fictional form by techniques involving the use of the imagination and visual apprehension.

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[18] William Barrett, Irrational Man, p. 227.

Robbe-Grillet's statements about the film *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* provide further guidance as to his ideas about imagination, memory, and dream, which may also illuminate the relationship of his thought to Heidegger's existentialism, to the visual, and to surrealism. In an article about the making of *Marienbad*, published in 1961, Robbe-Grillet points out that he was first attracted to Resnais' cinematography because of certain qualities:

> . . . an attempt to construct purely mental time and space -- of dreams, perhaps, or of memory, or at all events, the time and space of emotional life . . . .[19]

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[19] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "How a New Wave Film Director

What he admired most about the style of Resnais' work "was his tight, purposeful composition . . . [a] search for . . . those fixed attitudes and that rigidity of gesture, dialogue, and scenery which seem to be a strange mixture of sculpture and opera" (pp. 72-73). Robbe-Grillet appears to be interested here, as with the writings of Bousquet and Roussel, in the fusing of memory and dream as creative tools, with the pure, non-anecdotal discourse of fiction. In Marienbad, he suggests, images are primary, the actor's and actress's words and movements secondary (as apparent in the rigidity of the latter), so that the cinema "creates a reality with forms" where "we must seek [the art's] true content" (p. 73). Writing the scenario for a film means for Robbe-Grillet "imagining it [visually] in images with all that this implies . . . the position and the movement of the camera, as well as the order in which the shots are to be used when the picture is edited" (p. 73). In Marienbad, the discourse of creation, acting through the methodology of dream and memory is described firstly in terms of the visual image, and secondly in terms very close to those used in Robbe-Grillet's 1958 article on point of view in novelistic description. There he makes a direct comparison between film and literature, indicating how point of view is to be used by the new generation of novelists, in a fashion similar to the position and movement of the camera he claims for

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''(cont'd) made 'L'Année Dernière à Marienbad,'" Réalités (New York), No. 131 (October 1961), p. 73. All further references are to this edition of the article and appear in the text.

Marienbad.[28]

The imagination of the spectator is vital to the film, Robbe-Grillet says, as characters are nameless, have no past, and no links except those created by the imagination. Robbe-Grillet even adds that the totality of the film is made up of this imaginary stuff; the hero creates a reality of his own, a reality which he must persuade the woman to accept. The world of the large, luxury hotel is a "sealed and suffocating world, human beings and objects both seem to be victims of some form of enchantment, as in those dreams where you feel guided by a fatal destiny which you can neither alter or escape" (p. 73). It is from the fatal destiny of suffocation that the hero must deliver himself by using his imagination, just as Bousquet must use his imaginative faculties as a refuge from his crippled state. In Marienbad, the hero creates for the heroine a tale which encompasses her past, present, and future, what is likely only a fabrication gradually assuming a greater reality as the film progresses. Finally, the woman apparently accepts the destiny the stranger offers to her, and at that point imaginings fuse with reality.

In the discussion of Marienbad Robbe-Grillet refers to the destiny of the two characters, their imaginative or real existence, in terms which emphasize time -- past, present, and future -- as essential to the cinematography that creates "a reality with forms" (p. 73). As a component of the film, the concept of time is important on two levels according to Robbe-Grillet's commentary: firstly, in defining the existence, the way of life, real or imaginary, of the hero and heroine, and, secondly, in delineating the tense in which the action of the film is comprehended by the spectator. The hero, X, offers the heroine, A, what, in explanation of the plot, Robbe-Grillet says "appears to be the most impossible of all in the labyrinth where time seems to have been abolished: a past, a future, and freedom" (p. 74). But this plot is not to be understood in relation to customary conceptions of reality and linear time, that is, in terms of a past and future life of the characters which exist prior to, and after, the film:

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[28] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Notes sur la localisation et les deplacements du point de vue," La Revue des Lettres Modernes.

> As for the past which the hero introduces so intensely into this closed and empty world, we have the impression that he makes it up as he speaks. There is no last year and Marienbad can no longer be found on any map. It is a past, too, which has no reality beyond the moment it is forcibly recalled; and when it does finally triumph it has become the present, as if it has never ceased to be the present. (p. 74)

The "presentness" of the emotional interaction of the two characters, and of the plot, is paralleled, suggests Robbe-Grillet, by the tense inherent in the cinematographic medium; "on the screen, verbs are always in the present tense . . . it is obvious that what we see on the screen is happening now. We are given the gesture itself, not a report on it" (p. 74). Even memory becomes part of the present tense when depicted in a film image, because these images are imaginary, "and imagination, if it is strong enough, is always in the present" (p. 75).

In a revised edition of the same article, published as an introduction to the script of Marienbad, Robbe-Grillet notes that the imaginative content and form of the film forces the spectator "to come to terms with pure subjectivities"; two attitudes on the part of the spectator are then possible:

> . . . either the spectator will try to reconstruct some "Cartesian" schema -- the most linear, the most rational he can devise -- and this spectator will certainly find the film difficult if not incomprehensible; or else the spectator will let himself be carried along by the extraordinary images in front of him . . . and to this spectator the film will seem the "easiest" he has ever seen: a film addressed exclusively to his sensibility, to his faculties of sight, hearing, feeling. The story told will seem the most realistic, the truest, the one that best corresponds to his daily emotional life, as soon as he agrees to abandon ready-made ideas, psychological analysis, more or less clumsy systems of interpretation which machine-made fiction or films grind out for him ad nauseam, and which are the worst kinds of abstractions.[21]

Robbe-Grillet's insistence that the spectator must use his imagination to assimilate the film seems to imply that his technique is similar to that of the surrealists, but one should not confuse style with purpose. The surrealists were not concerned with imagination as the basis of technique or form. Bigsby says:

> . . . in assessing the influence of surrealism it is always essential to distinguish between style and philosophy. Surrealism is not simply the striking image, the irrational phrase or the dream-like

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[21] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Introduction," Last Year at Marienbad, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press, 1962), p. 14.

> texture. These are methods. It is essentially concerned with liberating the imagination and with expanding the definition of reality. (p. 78)

In a post-Freudian age, however, there is no longer the same need to expand upon the furthest possibilities of the imagination by delving into the depths of the unconscious -- to rely on the resolution of dream and reality into a "surreality." As Robbe-Grillet says, "il faut aussi préciser que nous sommes dans une période post-freudienne; tout le materiel psychanalytique qui surabonde dans mes livres ne peut donc plus appartenir à l'innocence, mais au contraire à la culture . . . ."[22] In the interview with McKendry, Robbe-Grillet enlarges upon the details of this concept where subconscious becomes culture: "The subconscious is no longer private property. It is more of an ideological or sociological phenomenon; there is certainly a collective subconscious."[23] Robbe-Grillet switches the surrealist emphasis on the individual, psychoanalytic factor, to the collective element -- from the personal to the cultural. Breton's programme to change consciousness by bringing the dream into the light of day in aesthetic form, has become implicit in the contemporary Weltanschauung. What was previously limited to the unconscious, is now either subconscious or conscious and, according to Robbe-Grillet, thus pertains to a collective culture. The story created by the imaginative faculties of X, the hero, and the spectator, in Marienbad will seem to correspond to the "daily emotional life" of contemporaneity, where insights into what was previously the psychology of the unconscious, have become part of the current, collective, subconscious. Imagination structures the film, but not the type of imagination defined by the surrealist's when they determined to unearth the subconscious. Robbe-Grillet's film does not attempt directly to change contemporary life, but rather to reflect its full complexity.

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[22] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Sur le choix des générateurs," Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui, II, 10/18, No. 725 (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1972), pp. 169-70.

[23] Maxime de la Falaise McKenry, "Alain Robbe-Grillet," p. 33.

The point Robbe-Grillet makes about imagination, and consequently about subjectivity, in his film, and its impact upon the spectator, supports the notion that in creating an aesthetics of consciousness, he is not attacking subjectivity itself, but rather the Cartesian version of subjectivity that pretends to a rational objectivity. Instead, he supports the Heideggerian approach to subjectivity, incorporating within it the imaginative faculty, that constitutes the real basis of our existence, and, therefore, the existence of the characters in Marienbad as they are presented and present themselves in visual images. The inclusion of imagination within a Heideggerian subjectivity, in his aesthetic approach, is supported by his comment on the unnecessary and artificial separation between art and life; "artistic creation has to do with the Imaginary; it does not have to do with what you call the real . . . . The real in which I live passes through my

Imaginary."[24]

Robbe-Grillet thus returns to an analysis of the creative force of the imagination, typical in his discussions of the visual aspects of literary form. In his statements about Marienbad he also relates imagination to a conceptualization of time, however, connecting it with Heidegger's idea of time as part of man's Dasein, where man's Being-in-the-world is a field spread out over time as well as space, a particular approach to temporality being basic to the notion of existence. In Heidegger, the explanation of human being as a whole is arrived at through the meaning and structure of existential time, which Marjorie Grene explains in the following manner:

> . . . it is not just time, but my time; it is the span of my life. Time in this sense is the "ontological" ground of human being, what human being most truly and deeply is . . . the basic tense of existential time is future. It moves not from past through present to future . . . . Reaching out to the future, it turns back to assimilate the past which has made the present.[25]

The most striking aspect of Heidegger's analysis of temporality, is the personal reaching out of the present to the future. Hero and heroine in Marienbad are strongly defined within the present of the film by their different, or similar, pasts and their possible futures. The present action is formulated as flashbacks of X's memory, which also may be hypotheses about the future, bringing the three tenses together, created and buttressed by the imagination.

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[24] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Images and Texts: A Dialogue," Generative Literature and Generative Art, ed. David Leach, p. 46.

[25] Marjorie Grene, "Heidegger," p. 461.

The impetus of the film is towards the openness of the future as part of the present. X already exists with a sense of openness, and he attempts to guide and persuade A to reach the point where she can achieve this outlook for herself, thus enabling them to move together in the direction of the infinite possibilities of the future. In his explanation of the heroine's part in the film in the article in Réalités Robbe-Grillet says that she finally "seems to agree to be what the unknown hero is expecting from her and to go away with him towards something, something without a name, something different -- love, poetry, freedom . . . or, perhaps, death" (p. 74). The ability to conceptualize "future," and to look towards it, no matter what form it may take, is more important than the exact nature of their destiny, an outlook which coincides with Heidegger's view of being and the future:

> Human being exists as anticipation of its own possibilities: it exists in advance of itself and grasps its situation as challenge to its own power of becoming what it may, rather than being what it must be. Human being is always reaching out beyond itself; its very being consists in aiming at what it is not yet.[24]

The character X, in Marienbad, exemplifies the man who understands and accepts this reaching out of being, the woman A represents a person learning to come to terms with this responsibility.

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[24] Marjorie Grene, "Heidegger," p. 460.

The structure of time in Marienbad is the most cogent example, in his films and novels, of Robbe-Grillet's application of Heidegger's notion of temporality to an aesthetic form, the result not only of his own explanation of character and plot in these terms, but also of the directly visual nature of the medium in which they are expressed. He comments in the article that "the cinema is certainly a predestined means of expression for this kind of story. The essential characteristic of the screen image is its presence" (p. 74). In the film Robbe-Grillet deals with the temporal in the immediate, visual medium, and there is no need for him to concern himself with the verbal intervention that interposes itself in the novel. The problems and potentialities of verbal communication are also explored by Heidegger in Sein und Zeit under the heading "Da-sein und Rede. Die Sprache."[27] According to Heidegger, neither sounds, nor marks on paper as sign systems, constitute the essence of language; language also consists of the level of understanding which is below articulation, a silence which is part of the mutual comprehension that arises from the understanding of Dasein. Heidegger points out "the existential background out of which these signs [words] emerge."[28] He also discusses the temporality of discourse in "Die Zeitlichkeit der Rede":

> Die Tempora ebenso wie die übrigen zeitlichen Phänomene der Sprache, "Aktionsarten" und

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[27] Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, pp. 160-66.

[28] William Barrett, Irrational Man, pp. 222-24.

> "Zeitstufen," entspringen nicht daraus, dass die Rede sich "auch" über "zeitliche," das heisst "in der Zeit" begegnende Vorgänge ausspricht. Auch nicht darin haben sie ihren Grund, dass das Sprechen "in einer psychischen Zeit" abläuft. Die Rede ist an ihr selbst zeitlich . . . .[29]

Language is thus a superstructural phenomenon built on the infrastructure of the discourse of existence itself; it possesses its own temporality. In Marienbad the primarily visual nature of the media, allows Robbe-Grillet to avoid the problem of dealing with the separate, temporal nature of discourse as sign. Instead, he works with the discourse of the non-articulated level of understanding, of the infrastructure, to produce an aesthetic form. In exploring the significance of past, present, and future tenses in human life, the visual imagery of film (rather than language) enables him to place the existence of his characters outside the usual, linear concept of time, and within the existential time whose basic tense is the future.

It is apparent in Robbe-Grillet's interest in the surrealist ideas of imagination, dream, and memory, and in his anti-Cartesian, Heideggerian interpretation of writers on the fringe of surrealism such as Bousquet and Roussel, that his notions about literature and the visual are related to surrealist principles, but they are not surrealist per se. Nonetheless, it is not surprising that his ideas about literature show some affinity with surrealism, the last, great revolutionary movement in art and literature of the first half of the twentieth century, originating in France.

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[29] Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 349.

Robbe-Grillet, as a French man of letters, is close to the literary world it evolved from, and could not help but be aware of its full ramifications in both literature and the visual arts. It proved a stronger influence on him than the works of James Joyce, William Faulkner, and Franz Kafka, all writers in whom he acknowledges an interest in the essays published in Pour un nouveau roman, and some of whom have been found by critics to be the impetus for many of his characteristic narrative devices. Robbe-Grillet even states that "Il est vrai que, dès mes premiers écrits, les préoccupations rousselliennes étaient pour moi les plus fortes. C'est pourquoi je lisais Roussel avec plus de passion que je ne lisais Joyce ou Proust."[30] Surrealism may be said to represent the strongest break with the past in the art of this century, and the nouveau romancier, while maintaining an independence of form in dissociating himself from tradition, cannot avoid the signposts set out by his revolutionary predecessors who sought to change the world itself by changing man's perception of it. In this attempt, one of the fundamental aims of the surrealists was "the universal recognition of desire." The study of surrealism by Roger Cardinal and Robert Short says that:

> Desire is the generic term used in Surrealism to denote all those forces within man which personal inhibition and social circumstances prevent from becoming realized . . . . It [Surrealism] first seeks the means of raising desire from the level of instinct to the level of consciousness . . . to

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[30] Renato Barilli, "Nouveau roman: aboutissement du roman phénoménologique ou novelle aventure romanesque? Discussion," Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui, I, p. 122.

> become aware of one's desires is the initial stage, the next being that of realization . . . . The surrealists' paramount concern with this movement of desire leads them to concentrate on the activities of the unconscious mind as the sphere in which desire may be observed in its original form.[31]

The surrealist focus on the recognition of desire as an agent of change relates to the effort to raise the level of consciousness to include instinctual as well as learned reactions. Robbe-Grillet assumes the surrealists achieved their goal, but he questions how a new consciousness, composed of previously unacknowledged factors (such as memory, dream, and imagination) relates to the style and form of a new fiction. The surrealist achievement is a vital foundation stone of Robbe-Grillet's literary theory and practice.

To further clarify Robbe-Grillet's aesthetic relations with surrealism, it may be useful to indicate, at this point, how his ideas differ from those of other writers whose work has certain contacts with surrealism, especially the dramatists of the theatre of the absurd. Although the surrealists held an interest for Beckett, Adamov, and Ionesco, the goals of the two groups were different: "where the surrealists saw a potential instrument [the grotesque, the fantastic, and the nonsensical] for provoking an imaginative revaluation of experience in such disconcerting images the absurdists saw expressionistic symbols -- distorted images of an equally distorted world" (Bigsby, p.

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[31] Roger Cardinal and Robert Stuart Short, Surrealism: Permanent Revelation (London: Studio Vista, 1970), p. 32.

80). Absurdist style is frequently similar to that of the surrealists, the basic difference being one of philosophy; the absurdist belief in the futility and helplessness of man in the face of the darkness of existence is counterpointed by the "expansive vision" and "political optimism" of the surrealists (Bigsby, p. 80). The absurdists see man as impotent, the surrealists view him as vital and powerful. Philosophically, Robbe-Grillet sounds the same note as the surrealists in his positive estimation of man's potential in the world. This stance, and his link with the surrealist philosophical outlook, is reinforced by the statement in "Nature, humanisme, tragédie" against the absurdist world view and its tragic consequences in Camus' L'Étranger; "L'absurde est . . . une forme d'humanisme tragique. Ce n'est pas un constat de séparation entre l'homme et les choses" (p. 58). In proposing a solution to the continuing philosophical problem of man's existence in the world, Robbe-Grillet's development of surrealist ideas to suit his literary form stresses the positive.

Robbe-Grillet's general affinity with surrealism moves in a direction which is close to the philosophical goals of the movement, and his optimism underlies his reshaping of surrealist ideas in an attempt to stimulate originality in the contemporary novel and create new concepts of fiction. Jean Roudaut's suggestion that "du milieu surréaliste Robbe-Grillet retient la leçon des marginaux,"[32] such as

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[32] Jean Roudaut, "Deux éléments surréalistes dans les écrits d'Alain Robbe-Grillet," Obliques, No. 16-17, p. 145.

Bousquet, Roussel, and Duchamp, implies a narrowness of interest, however, which is inconsistent with Robbe-Grillet's statement that he has been greatly influenced by surrealism. In the essays on Bousquet and Roussel he discusses certain surrealist techniques, particularly descriptive ones, in a fresh light which puts them at the service of a new generation of novelists, and the ontological basis of this analysis in Heideggerian philosophy brings out the revolutionary impact of aspects of surrealists aesthetics in a contemporary context. This approach culminates in an indissoluble linkage between the visual image and the dream in his statement that "dreams are images."[33] Even though he mentions in the same place that the novel has to do with the description of dreams (that is, in a verbal rather than a visual mode), he overcomes this problem, in part, through the use of visual apprehension, which may be understood in terms of Heidegger's notion of Sicht.

The visual or dream image is, in Robbe-Grillet's perspective, very much a part of the structure of the imagination, that omnipresent principle of the surrealists, particularly evident in the belief in the "point suprême," that Breton defines in the following manner:

> Tout porte à croire qu'il existe un certain point de l'esprit d'où la vie et la mort, le réel et

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[32](cont'd) All further references are to this edition of the article and appear in the text.

[33] Maxime de la Falaise McKendry, "Alain Robbe-Grillet," p. 32.

> l'imaginaire, le passé et le futur, le communicable et l'incommunicable, le haut et le bas cessent d'être perçus contradictoirement. Or, c'est en vain qu'on chercherait à l'activité surréaliste un autre mobile que l'espoir de détermination de ce point.[34]

But Robbe-Grillet diverges from (or expands upon) the particularity of the surrealist idea of the image. Following the lead of Pierre Reverdy, the surrealists were interested in the formulation of the image as a creative process, particularly in the bringing together of two remote realities on a highly arbitrary plane to create a strong "emotional power and poetic reality."[35] Robbe-Grillet, on the other hand, is not concerned so much with the creative process which goes into the making of an image (visual or verbal), as were the surrealists, but with the role image and representation play in our society. In an essay on pornographic images, he examines how the pleasure of looking at sexual representations influences the pleasure in the real act. Typically, his answer to this problem returns us to the importance of the human imagination in the delineation of every aspect of life:

> C'est en somme tout le problème de l'imagination qui, comme son nom l'indique, crée sans cesse des images et qui a besoin d'elles pour se nourrir; c'est là une des plus hautes facultés de l'espèce humaine, je dirais presque sa particularité la plus

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[34] André Breton, "Second manifeste du surréalisme (1930)," Manifestes du surréalism, ed. Jean-Jacques Pauvert (Paris: J.-J. Pauvert, 1962), p. 154.

[35] Pierre Reverdy, "L'Image," Nord-Sud, No. 13 (March 1918); rpt. Marcel Jean, ed., The Autobiography of Surrealism, The Documents of Twentieth Century Art, (New York: Viking Press, 1980), pp. 41-42.

passionnante.[34]

Robbe-Grillet explains the pornographic, visual image, by placing it within the imagination, rather than explicating a direct relationship with reality. Imagination is a major factor in defining man's ontological status in the world, and thus the motivating factor of Robbe-Grillet's aesthetics is found in existential philosophy. He does not stress the creative process of image making per se, but its implications for man's Being-in-the-world.

The desire to shock, as an aesthetic principle, is common both to Robbe-Grillet and the surrealists. The surrealist method frequently consists of the removal of objects from their normal context, particularly in painting, to create the element of surprise: for example, de Chirico's The Song of Love (1914; New York, Museum of Modern Art), with its enormous glove and sculpted head against a background of mysterious arcades, represented, to the surrealists, the first visual counterpart of the reconciliation of two distant realities found in Lautréamont's Les Chants de Maldoror. The work first inspired René Magritte, in 1922, to begin his surrealist painting, eventually arriving at images such as those in The Annuciation (1930; Brussels, Private collection) where a background of natural vegetation is juxtaposed with a forest of bedposts. For Robbe-Grillet, however, shock involves not only a reordering of content but also of aesthetic structures.[37] Patrick Waldberg comments on the motivations of the surrealists:

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[34] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "'Histoire de rats' ou la vertu c'est ce qui mène au crime," Obliques, No. 16-17, p. 172.

> The surrealists had two passwords: "To change life" (Rimbaud) and "To transform the world" (Marx). To change life meant to modify feeling, to guide the spirit in new directions, to wean the individual away from a rational view of the world. To this poetic requirement was added that of transforming the world on the social and moral level.[38]

The surrealists' drive for individual and social change is all-embracing, but Robbe-Grillet's is more restrictive in his attitude towards these goals, concentrating on aesthetics rather than social reform:

> Redonnons donc à la notion d'engagement le seul sens qu'elle peut avoir pour nous. Au lieu d'être de nature politique, l'engagement c'est, pour l'écrivain, la pleine conscience des problèmes actuels de son propre language, la conviction de leur extrême importance, la volonté de les résoudre de l'intérieur. C'est là, pour lui, la seule chance de demeurer un artiste et, sans doute aussi, par voie de conséquence obscure et lointaine, de servir un jour peut-être à quelque chose -- peut-être même à la révolution. ("Sur quelques notions périmées," p. 39)

The desire and the need to shock is one way of changing literature, although we have seen that Robbe-Grillet's ideas about fiction are related to a concept of man's being, Dasein, which calls for a new notion of subjectivity and a new perspective on the world. In the end, his desire for change relates to a larger aspect of life than the surrealist category of individual and social change. His notions about the imaginative significance of the image, and about the necessity for literature to have shock value, coincide in that they are directed towards change at the core of man's life, his being.

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[37] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Les Formes du roman contemporain," University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, 12 October, 1983.

[38] Patrick Waldberg, Surrealism (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), p. 18.

The evolution and expansion of surrealist concepts is also apparent in Robbe-Grillet's idea of the irrational, although here he appears to concur more with the surrealists conceptually, if not stylistically, than about the significance of the image and of shock value in art. In 1924 the surrealists believed that only automatism, not rational, linear narrative, could express inner psychic reality; André Breton defined the noun surrealism as:

> Surréalisme, n.m. Automatisme psychique pur par lequel on se propose d'exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée. Dictée de la pensée, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale.[39]

In the same vein, Robbe-Grillet says "it is really impossible to narrate a dream . . . because to narrate a dream is to replace within a rational system that which escapes rationality."[40] Robbe-Grillet links the irrational to art:

> . . . modern art is precisely this attempt to construct something that is related to this life that we have within us, which is perhaps more important than the other one, and which does not function in the same manner as the rational one. I think that all of the relations of dreams that you have to the New Novel . . . are not there by

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[39] André Breton, "Manifeste du surréalisme (1924)," Manifestes du surréalisme, p. 40.

[40] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Images and Texts," pp. 45-46.

> accident because this type of relation, this type of space, we have indeed within us.[41]

While Robbe-Grillet acknowledges the importance of the irrational to art, as do Breton and the surrealists, his aesthetic expression differs significantly. In drawing on the irrational in automatic writing the surrealists remained in an uncontrolled, passive state ; Breton told them to write quickly, in the absence of preconceived subject, without attempting to reread,[42] a freewheeling method very different from Robbe-Grillet's firmly directed, self-conscious efforts at literary creation. Gaëtan Picon points out that:

> Automatic writing and collage (as practised by Max Ernst and defined literally by Aragon) were not calculated to disrupt or challenge meaning. They were a vehicle for arriving at another meaning, at a hidden reality capable of adding a new dimension of meaning to man's perpetual self-questionings.[43]

The hidden reality, if found, might disrupt meaning in the long run, but the surrealists' primary aim was to seek the hidden. Robbe-Grillet's narrative technique is more directly disruptive, an endeavour to upset conventional meaning. The surrealists' failed to arrive at a successful narrative technique for automatism, because that would have required a primary concern with disruption, and a secondary concern with concealed meaning. They were, however, most interested in being revolutionaries of consciousness, not in being the avant-garde of literature. In Robbe-Grillet's ideas about fiction any breakthrough in consciousness, whether linked with the irrational, or with Heideggerian Dasein, is restricted to the evolution (or revolution) of literary form.

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[41] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Images and Texts," p. 46.

[42] André Breton, "Manifeste du surréalisme (1924)," pp. 44-45.

[43] Gaëtàn Picon, Surrealists and Surrealism, p. 44.

Nonetheless, Robbe-Grillet makes use of the surrealists' discovery of the hidden reality, of the unconscious. The surrealists delved into the unconscious to find new material, which later became the existing material of collective, contemporary culture. Robbe-Grillet said in 1979, "the materials which combine to constitute the work of art are the stereotypes of a collective unconscious."[44] The discoveries of the surrealists served two ends: to make the unconscious part of collective culture (originating with the individual's psychological makeup) and to provide a source for an art partaking of the collective. When Robbe-Grillet's words are taken in the context of stereotypes found in popular literary genres such as detective fiction and pornography (that he makes use of in his fiction), it appears that he should be employing the term collective consciousness, rather than collective unconscious. It is not necessarily true that these stereotypes are unconscious. In spite of the confusion caused by the use of these terms, however, he moves forward from the surrealist emphasis on the imaginative experience as personal and individual, to explicate its part in the social collectivity.

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[44] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Images and Texts," p. 46.

Although this may seem a long preliminary discussion of the general relationship between Robbe-Grillet's ideas about the novel form, and surrealism, it is a step which must be taken before entering into any exploration of affinities between his early novels and surrealist painting. Critical commentary on the connections between Robbe-Grillet's work and surrealism is far from substantial, and lacking in close analysis. A discussion of the particularity of visual relationships would indeed be unsound if surrealism was not shown to be "a possible feature of all the objects to be compared,"[45] even in a context limited to the contemporary evolution of the original aesthetics of the movement and its precursors. With only a brief statement on the topic, Bruce Morrissette makes a cogent summary of the significance of surrealism to Robbe-Grillet's writing:

> In an essay on "Joë Bosquet the Dreamer," Robbe-Grillet identifies specific surrealist influences on that author and points out doctrines and techniques capable, by modification and extention, of furthering the purposes of a new generation of writers. Since Robbe-Grillet has often, in interviews and lectures, referred to surrealism as one of the main sources (along with Kafka, Raymond Roussel, Joyce, and Faulkner) of the New Novel, his single written treatment of the subject deserves attention.
>
> Robbe-Grillet foresees the emergence, from what he terms the "false dream sleep" of the surrealists, of techniques of description more or less in accord with the "objectal style" that Roland Barthes soon was to identify with Robbe-Grillet's own hyper-real renditions of things, in a new literary movement that Barthes was to call "chosisme." Despite the "phantasmagorias and poetic charlatanism" of some

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[45] James D. Merriman, "The Parallel of the Arts: Some Misgivings and a Faint Affirmation: Part I," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 31, No. 2 (Winter 1972), p. 160.

> surrealist efforts, Robbe-Grillet writes, André Breton's poetics at least had the merit of bringing out hidden aspects of objects, expressing "the abnormal sharpness with which the simplest objects, a chair, a pebble, a hand, appear in dreams, or the fall of some piece of débris [. . .] as if the fragment were eternalized in the act of falling." (Later, Robbe-Grillet was to attribute this same "realism of presence" to objects shown in films.) Another idea advanced in the Bosquet article, and prophetic of fictional structures in Robbe-Grillet's future novels, is that gratuitous objects and the play of "objective chance" (as the surrealists insisted) illuminate "the enigmatic connections which bind everyday life to art." Fascination with things described in the style of surrealist "magic realism" (Magritte, Roy), preoccupation with "stopped movement" (as in the "frozen scenes" of his novels), discovery in the outside world of a system of object-signs (which will become the objective correlatives of our affective life or our mental states), all these are present in the Bosquet article. One passage on the role of things is especially noteworthy: "Finally, we must be on guard against allegorical constructions and symbolism. [. . .] Each object, each event, each form, is in fact its own symbol. [. . .] Bosquet's universe -- which is ours -- is a world of signs. Everything is a sign; and not a sign of something else, something more perfect and situated beyond our reach, but a sign of itself, of an essence which asks only to be revealed."[46]

Morrissette does not mention the essay on Roussel, but he is correct in noting that surrealism is important to Robbe-Grillet "by modification and extention." He suggests that Robbe-Grillet approves of facets of Breton's poetics, without noting that the author does not mention Breton by name; the notion of the surrealist object and of "objective chance," which Morrissette mentions in this connection, need to be further defined and situated in the context of the nouveau roman in order for them to be valuable. The "magic realism" of stopped movement and frozen scenes is more complex, as well, than Morrissette would lead us to believe.

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[46] Bruce Morrissette, The Novels of Robbe-Grillet, pp. 24-25. Morrissette consistently misspells the name Bousquet.

Jean Miesch recognizes in Robbe-Grillet's nouveau roman, a fiction deployed to "nous aider à inventer le monde dans lequel nous vivons," where "on peut reconnaître les plus ambitieuses revendications du surréalisme pour qui transformer le monde et changer la vie ne faisaient qu'un."[47] Miesch notes that the experience of the surrealists in the attempt to change the world, no longer allows contemporary novelists to confound social revolution with literary revolution, however, and thus Robbe-Grillet, as nouveau romancier, can place more stress on the imagination in his vision of the novel of the future. Miesch supports this idea by quoting, as does Morrissette, from the essay on Bousquet. In Le Roman de l'absence Bernal discusses the innovations inherent in the objective and positive tone of Robbe-Grillet's descriptive technique, involving imagination and dream, although she does not define what she means by the real as opposed to the imaginary. She notes in fiction "La représentation classique de la réalité ne permettait pas la non-distinction de ces deux niveaux de la réalité," with one exception -- the attempts of the surrealists.[48] Like Morrissette, she mentions Breton's name herself, only she connects him with the attempt to destroy logical distinctions between the two states. Quoting from the first surrealist manifesto, she remarks that there is a profound difference between the intentions of the surrealists and those of Robbe-Grillet:

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[47] Jean Miesch, Robbe Grillet, Classiques du XXe siècle, No. 75 (Paris: Éditions Universitaires, 1965), pp. 105-06.

[48] Olga Bernal, Alain Robbe-Grillet: le roman de l'absence, p. 181.

> L'esprit surréaliste est vitaliste, le roman de Robbe-Grillet cherche, au contraire, à épurer la conscience, à la priver d'épaisseur. Si André Breton avait déclaré la guerre aux procédés logiques dans la littérature, c'était pour mieux "capter" les richesses de l'esprit: "Si les profondeurs de notre esprit recèlent d'étranges forces . . . il y a tout intérêt à les capter . . ." (Manifestes du surréalisme, p. 19). Chez Robbe-Grillet, la personnalité humaine est discontinue, fragmentée, incapable d'être, chez André Breton, elle est continuité absolue: "la ponctuation s'oppose sans doute à la continuité absolue de la coulée qui nous occupe . . . . Fiez-vous au caractère inépuisable du murmure" (Manifestes du surréalisme, p. 43).[44]

We have seen in the first chapter, in Robbe-Grillet's approach to characterization, that his heros or anti-heroes are not necessarily "incapable d'être," but rather participating in the néant which is at the basis of existence, and from which their subjectivity is formed. The suggestion that Robbe-Grillet's techniques are related to Breton's attempt to destroy logic is relevant, nonetheless, because Bernal notes that, unlike Breton, Robbe-Grillet systematizes his refusal to distinguish between the real and the imaginary. In the latter quotation, on one level, there remains a differentiation between phantoms and the exterior world, but on other level, this distinction is dissolved as Robbe-Grillet validates the reality created by the consciousness, or vision, of man, usually in relation to the peculiar obsessions of an individual.[50]

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[44] Olga Bernal, Alain Robbe-Grillet, p. 180.

In his book on Robbe-Grillet Ben Stoltzfus entitles one of the chapters "Surrealism and its Image," where he analyses the subjective form of expression in Le Voyeur and La Jalousie, as part of a voluntary exploration of delirium, through the depiction of the psyches of the protagonists in the respective novels:

> Since the surrealists were using the theories of Freudian determinism for an elaboration of "related" images they were convinced that the creative genius would be able to tap significant layers of the human subconscious out of which would come universal (hence significant) juxtapositions capable of involving the reader's (or the spectator's in the case of painting) psyche. The truth of these images was equated with beauty but it was not a question of arbitrarily regrouping words or images. Breton himself describes it as the artist's capacity to create his own halluciations, not as pure delirium, but as an exploration of delirium. The spontaneous recording of images surging forth from the subconscious constitutes the element of "truth" the surrealists were pursuing. Has not Robbe-Grillet created two fictional characters whose psyches he uses for a voluntary of delirium?[51]

Stoltzfus relates the psychology of Robbe-Grillet's characters to the principle of surrealism, but he also compares imagery:

> The crackling sounds made by mandibles, a comb, and fire, therefore, are capable of evoking an entire sequence whose impact on the reader must again be described as surrealistic. The association of these images depends upon the libidinal drive of the unconscious (the jealous husband's in this case) which, the surrealists claim, is the source of all such juxtapositions. Do they not say that the greater the dissimilarity of the juxtaposed objects

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[50] Olga Bernal, Alain Robbe-Grillet, pp. 181-82.

[51] Ben F. Stoltzfus, Alain Robbe-Grillet and the New French Novel, Crosscurrents Modern Critiques (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), p. 126.

> the greater the beauty? Are not the images of surrealism, whose impact depends not upon their analysis but upon "bringing together of two more or less distant realties," an objectification of the subconscious? And did not Breton seek the active synthesis of the objective and the subjective in terms of what he called "le hasard objectif" (objective chance)? The great role of surrealism, according to Breton, is to capture "the projected film of word-images which surges forth from their engulfed depths." These words might have been used by Robbe-Grillet himself to describe an aspect of his own aesthetic doctrine.[52]

Stoltzfus is apparently referring to Robbe-Grillet's comment on Marienbad in Réalités that "we can very easily imagine a scene in with the actor's words and movements would become secondary in the spectator's mind to the image" (p. 73). The outcome of Robbe-Grillet's use of the surrealist techniques of the exploration of delirium, objective chance, and imagery, according to Stoltzfus, is found in two novels which pair two apparently incompatible realities, fusing the inner outer world of the protagonists in an objective description: "tangible objectivity" is related to "the most extreme subjectivity."[53] The pairing of two such realities fulfills one of the basic goals of the surrealist experiment. Stoltzfus notes, however, that the surrealist subject matter and form is subjective, while in Robbe-Grillet topical matters are expressed subjectively and form manifests itself objectively.

In an article published in 1978 on the films of the Spanish surrealist Luis Buñuel, Eliot Rubinstein mentions

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[52] Ben Stoltzfus, Alain Robbe-Grillet, pp. 125-26.

[53] Ben Stoltzfus, Alain Robbe-Grillet, p. 129.

Robbe-Grillet's comments on the cinema in "Temps et description": he explains that film is of interest to the writers of the new novel because of its subjective and imaginary aspects.[54] Rubinstein disagrees, however, with Robbe-Grillet's insistence that the universe of the film is characteristically in the perpetual present. Instead, the characteristically indicative is the correct tense to be used in a discussion of modern cinema and Buñuel's films. Rather than the subjective, one should refer to the subjunctive, a point which is well taken; subjectivity is defined as "of, relating to, or constituting a verb form or a set of forms that represents a denoted act of state not as fact but as contingent or possible or viewed emotionally (as with doubt or desire)."[55] (Robbe-Grillet himself says that Marienbad is an attempt to construct "the time and space of emotional life.") Rubinstein enlarges upon the subjective in relation to Buñuel's films, making, in the process, an interesting observation about Robbe-Grillet's filmmaking through comparison with Buñuel's work. Colin Westerbeck's article on Robbe-Grillet's cinema briefly mentions surrealism, but only to say that it is not so much surrealistic as it seems to be at first, but rather that the films are "intra-realistic," that is, they document a reality that exists only in the artist's perception.[56]

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[54] Elliot Rubinstein, "Buñuel's World or the World and Buñuel," Philosophy and Literature, 2, No. 2 (Fall 1978), pp. 237-48.

[55] Elliot Rubinstein, "Buñuel," pp. 244-45.

Returning to the commentary on surrealist aspects of Robbe-Grillet's notions about literature, in his Problèmes du nouveau roman, Jean Ricardou's analysis of the relationship of one of Robbe-Grillet's fictional principles to Breton's concept of the metaphor, is the most convincing argument of those mentioned thus far. Ricardou suggests that for Breton, "hors de la métaphore, il n'est point du salut," while for Robbe-Grillet "il n'est de salut que hors de la métaphore."[57] Contradictory as these two positions sound, they rest on a single attitude: the observation of limited textual fragments that define the metaphor as "entité," "in vitro." This approach to metaphor is too limited for Ricardou; style and novel are reciprocal inventions and a metaphor must be seen in the context of both. Ricardou proposes, alternately, a study of metaphor "in vivo" to show that a metaphor always consists of an "ailleurs" and an "ici"; the relationships of metaphor may be approached in three ways, according to whether the ailleurs is situated interior to the context, exterior to the context, or within and without at the same time. He quotes examples mentioned by Robbe-Grillet in "Nature, humanisme, tragédie" that "le temps est 'capricieux,'" "la montagne 'majestueuse,'" the "soleil 'impitoyable,'" or that "la forêt" has a "coeur" (p.

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[56] Colin Westerbeck, "Intrastructures: The Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet," p. 57.

[57] Jean Ricardou, Problèmes du nouveau roman (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), p. 145.

48). If metaphor is analysed internally, in the three ways mentioned, Ricardou believes that one may arrive at a more solid classification of the metaphor than is possible with Breton's capricious definition of a metaphor *in vitro* as the analogical correspondance of the inverse, where the highest degree of arbitrariness is most desirable. Ricardou's theory of the metaphor, while not enlightening as to surrealist aspects of Robbe-Grillet's novels, does prove that a juxtaposition of Robbe-Grillet's ideas with those of Breton can be fruitful.

Ricardou's development of this theory of the metaphor resurfaces, and is enlarged upon, in Pierre and Madeline Caminade's presentation "Métaphore et nouveau roman," and Robbe-Grillet's contribution to the discussion of their paper allows him to clear up certain confused notions surrounding his use of metaphor in fiction:

> Pierre Robin fait semblant de croire que les métaphores dont j'ai condamné l'emploi et celles que j'ai utilisées sont les mêmes. Or Ricardou a justement fait la différence entre les deux. Je ne suis pas allé aussi loin que lui dans la théorisation de la métaphore, mais ceci en tout cas est évident: celles que je condamnais renvoyaient à tout l'humanisme culturel, et celles que j'ai employées au contraire n'étaient qu'une sorte de réference à l'imagerie populaire désignée comme telle.[88]

A reference to Breton's surrealist use of the metaphor, when placed beside Robbe-Grillet's interpretation of the metaphor, unearths an aspect of self-conscious narrative, the author's own understanding of metaphor.

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[88] Pierre and Madeline Caminade, "Métaphore et nouveau roman: Discussion," pp. 277-78.

Jean Roudaut's article, published in Obliques, is the first study to explicate the parallelisms between Robbe-Grillet's attitudes towards fiction and surrealist literature, with a detailed enough analysis to provide some valuable and thought provoking insights. In "Deux éléments surréalistes dans les écrits d'Alain Robbe-Grillet" Roudaut indicates that the nouveau romancier's idea of literature is related to Breton's notion of the realistic novel and his belief that, when this form is used, the only one of its techniques that can escape customary, preformed effects, is description. Descriptive limits are not constituted by the object described but by "la quantité utilisable de vocabulaire, [qui] substituait une organisation verbale (et auditive) à une volonté picturale (et visuelle)" (p. 142). Robbe-Grillet's fiction fulfills Breton's basic requirements that the text be a verbal organization first of all, making the "référent" surplus. Roudaut also finds in Robbe-Grillet's novels a gratuitousness of expression which is consistent with Breton's idea of the novel, opposing liberty to necessity, and opting for the true, delirious expression of life. For example, in Instantanés, in the first short story "Le Mannequin" (pp. 9-13), the opening phrase "la cafetière est sur la table" (p. 9) plays the same gratuitous role as Lautréamont's image of the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissection table, part of the ludic attitude in both writers. The liberation of literature from transcription and testament that Robbe-Grillet comments on in Bousquet's writing, indicates his interest in an autonomous literature where the verbal element plays the role of the object. By extension from the surrealist theory of verbal organization, Roudaut believes that Robbe-Grillet's novels are "literary machines" that produce dreams:

> Se référant à un rêveur définitif, A. Robbe-Grillet franchit un pas essentiel: l'écrit n'est pas transcription du rêve; il ne dit pas, avec plus ou moins de bonheur, le souvenir qu'on garde d'un rêve antérieur: le livre constitue le rêve même. (pp. 143-44)

Through this discussion of verbal organization (seen also, as Roudaut notes, as analogous to visual organization), and of dream, in the relationship of Robbe-Grillet's fiction to surrealist literature, Roudaut arrives at the significant insight that while the nouveau romancier makes use of certain elements of surrealism, he excludes others; "Que l'on ne s'étonne pas de voir ici Robbe-Grillet rejeter certaine technique surréaliste (l'automatisme) tout comme il rejette la théorie des images et le mythe du point suprême" (p. 144).

The second surrealist element which Roudaut finds in Robbe-Grillet's fiction is also mentioned in the essay on Roussel; Robbe-Grillet sees Roussel's writing as an enigma without a secret, to form a mask and protection which Roudaut believes is consolidated in the contemporary author's theories, "En affirmant aussi catégoriquement une pensée discutable, A. Robbe-Grillet tente de consolider sa propre théorie de la surface" (p. 145). When Roussel says that an anecdote no longer has content, but instead movement, order, and composition making it a mechanized form of reproduction and modification, Roussel believes that Robbe-Grillet finds in this suggestion the official programme for his own writing, which is exemplified in Les Gommes where the end of the novel returns to the beginning. Robbe-Grillet approves of Roussel's idea that the novel is no longer a form of cause and effect, but one of deplacement and condensation. The fictional movement is dominated by the order of discourse which affirms the work as "pure creation." Roudaut sums up Robbe-Grillet's relationship to the surrealists in the following manner:

> Du milieu surréaliste Robbe-Grillet retient la leçon des marginaux Bousquet et Roussel. Et celle de Duchamp. Il aime mieux siéger parmi les Grands invités que parmi les Grands invitants. L'orthodoxie le séduit peu. Il a trop le sens de l'humour et le goût des sciences inexactes. (p. 145)

In his attempt to relate Robbe-Grillet's ideas about fiction to particular aspects of surrealism, Roudaut includes in his list of names that of Marcel Duchamp, an artist whose work was greatly praised by Breton, and, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, Robbe-Grillet himself indicates his interest in Duchamp. Patrick Waldberg points out that Duchamp represents the extreme of one of the two polarities in art with which the surrealists felt an affinity: not the mode of "dream and childhood" represented by de Chirico, but the art which is "superlatively aware, attempting to substitute pure behaviour for art."[5] While the exact role of Marcel Duchamp's work as a precursor of and influence on the surrealist movement remains debatable, Duchamp was extremely interested in, and a master of, the game of chess. The self-consciousness of his approach to this game, on which he wrote a study in collaboration with Vitaly Halberstadt entitled *L'Opposition et les cases conjuquées sont reconciliées*, carries over into his attitude to the creative act in art.[60] Undoubtedly this is one of the reasons Roudaut believes he is one of the "grands invitées" with whom Robbe-Grillet is empathetic. The contemporary artist Jasper Johns says of Duchamp:

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[5] Patrick Waldberg, Surrealism, p. 33.

> He declared that he wanted to kill art ("for myself") but his persistent attempts to destroy frames of reference altered our thinking, established new units of thought, "a new thought for that object."[61]

The self-conscious destruction of accepted frames of reference is also characteristic of Robbe-Grillet's treatment of the novel form. In order to liberate the novel from previous forms, the *nouveau romancier* must construct description visually and self-consciously to escape the intellectual dominance of the commonly accepted version of reality, imposed on him from the outside.

While Roudaut relates Robbe-Grillet's ideas to the visual aspect of surrealism via Duchamp, Jean Claude Vareille, in his book entitled *Alain Robbe-Grillet*

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[60] Marcel Duchamp and Vitaly Halberstadt, *L'Opposition et les cases conjugées sont reconciliées* (Paris: Éditions de l'Échiquier, 1932).

[61] Jasper Johns, "Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968)," *Artforum*, 7, No. 3 (November 1968), 6.

L'étrange, examines Robbe-Grillet's novels using a Freudian analysis of their dream construction, and mentions that this type of structure creates a possible relationship with the work of the surrealist painters:

> Il serait donc passionnant de faire une étude des rapports entre le surréalisme et Alain Robbe-Grillet, et des dettes que le romancier a contractées moins peut-être à l'égard des écrivains que des peintres de ce mouvement, qui semblent véritablement le hanter.[62]

Although Vareille points out that such an analysis is, unfortunately, outside the scope of his study, he mentions in a footnote that the Jaffé-Freem book on the relationship of Robbe-Grillet's writing to cubist painting either misses the essential point, "Ou plutôt, ce qu'il conviendrait d'étudier c'est, à l'intérieur des obsessions plastiques d'Alain Robbe-Grillet, la dialectique cubisme/surréalisme, chaque pôle servant d'alibi à l'autre."[63] Vareille's brief suggestion about surrealism points directly to a relationship with the visual aspect of the movement, a supposition he feels safe in making in view of Robbe-Grillet's publication of La Belle Captive with the Magritte paintings:

> L'oeuvre d'Alain Robbe-Grillet est sans doute une de celles qui illustrent le mieux un tel rapprochement avec le rêve. Sous quelqu'angle qu'on la considère elle nous plonge dans une atmosphère d'abord onirique. Qui plus est, au fur et à mesure qu'elle progresse, elle revêt de plus en plus le visage fantastique, irréel et surréel de tel tableau de Dali, Chirico, Delvaux, ou R. Magritte avec la

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[62] Jean Claude Vareille, Alain Robbe-Grillet L'Étrange (Paris: A.-G. Nizet, 1981), p. 13.

[63] Jean Claude Vareille, Alain Robbe-Grillet, p. 13.

> collaboration (posthume) duquel Alain Robbe-Grillet a réalisé *La Belle captive* (1975), dialogue entre des images et un texte.[44]

Vareille sees Robbe-Grillet's and the surrealists' idea of the dream as an entry point into the relationship between his fiction and painting.

However, Robbe-Grillet's critics do not provide an analysis of his own comments on surrealism. When Morrissette and Miesch mention the essays on Bousquet and Roussel, the exegesis is not adequate to the importance of the topic, and in view of this deficiency it is apparent that such a discussion is the necessary starting point of an inquiry into the unexplored area of Robbe-Grillet's work and surrealism, as well as Robbe-Grillet's novels and surrealist art. The previous part of this chapter has attempted to remedy the problem and to indicate the direction which should be taken in exploring the relationship of Robbe-Grillet's fiction to surrealist painting -- towards a comparison with the "verists" and the "imagiers." A discussion of surrealism per se would not be relevant to Robbe-Grillet's attitude towards and interest in the aesthetic forms of the movement, not only because Robbe-Grillet's work is the logical focus of the discussion, but also because surrealist activity took place on different levels, not all necessarily related to Robbe-Grillet's theory or practice. Uwe Schneede indicates three aspects of surrealism which may be delineated as the work of the 1920's and the 1930's: firstly, Breton's theoretical guidelines provided in the manifestoes of 1924 and 1929, which call for the "systematic exploitation and investigation of the unconscious faculties"; secondly, the socio-political debate over the alternatives of surrealist instigation of intellectual or proletarian revolution; finally, the active production of poetry, novels, films, and works of art.[65] The last category, that of painting, is the most directly relevant to Robbe-Grillet's concerns about literature, although there is some overlap between aesthetic and other concerns, as we have seen in Robbe-Grillet's analysis of dream and imagination in literature.

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[44] Jean Claude Vareille, *Alain Robbe-Grillet*, p. 12.

Contradictions were inherent in the surrealist movement, a factor that also makes it necessary to pay heed to certain methodological limitations in a discussion linking surrealist art to the work of a nouveau romancier. Schneede says:

> There is no doubt that Bretonian theory, political debate, and artistic practice mutually influenced each other. Of crucial importance, however, is the fact that Breton's theoretical dogmas did not exercise any final binding force on the highly individualized methods of composition used by the Surrealist. (Furthermore, the visual artists participated very little in politics.) . . . . Surrealist painting, which united such diverse figures as Miro and Dali, Masson and Magritte, under a single catchword, did not constitute a particular style, but was instead only one component of the Surrealist movement.[66]

Within the diversity of surrealism in general, painting finds its specialized contradictions, making it essential to proceed by way of a discussion of specific works of art in an analysis of Robbe-Grillet's writing and the visual aspects of surrealism.

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[65] Uwe M. Schneede, René Magritte: Life and Work, trans. W. Walter Jaffe (London: Barron's, 1982), pp. 128-29.

[66] Uwe Schneede, René Magritte, p. 130.

It seems logical, given Robbe-Grillet's use of visual technique in his novels, that pictorial, surrealist sensibilité would be central to his development and manipulation of elements of surrealism. Marcelin Pleynet is correct to point out in an article written in 1971 that Breton's understanding of the relation of surrealist painting to surrealist literature is inadequate, due to the fact that "it stems from a premature assimilation of the specific evolutions of two separate disciplines, in this instance the literary and the pictorial."[67] But whatever Breton's biases and inaccuracies, it remains true that the surrealist movement is a totality, made up of both art and literature. Gaëtan Picon makes this point very incisively:

> Surrealism completely renewed our view of the literature and art of the past, and it thereby renewed the present practice of poetry and painting. This being so, it cannot rightly be understood by regarding it as a literary movement combined and interacting with an art movement. The two are indivisible, for what actually happened was an upheaval of the creative mind and imagination.[68]

This indivisibility resurfaces, contemporaneous and invigorated in Robbe-Grillet's nouveau roman, drawing on the sources (Giorgio de Chirico) and resources (Magritte,

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[67] Marcelin Pleynet, "Painting and Surrealism and Painting," trans. Paul Rodgers, in Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook, 4 (1982), 38.

[68] Gaëtan Picon, Surrealists and Surrealism, p. 5.

Delvaux) of surrealist, verist painting.

# V. VERBAL-VISUAL AFFINITIES IN ROBBE-GRILLET AND GIORGIO DE CHIRICO: UN RÉGICIDE, LES GOMMES, and LE VOYEUR

The use of the dream as a way of arriving at literary content is a method central to surrealist theory and practice, and in Robbe-Grillet this theory becomes a tool of literary form. The great import it has for his fiction has become particularly apparent since the publication of Un Régicide in 1978, especially in the author's comments on the novel. In the previous chapter we have noted Robbe-Grillet's insistence in the late 1970's that the real in which he lives passes through his imagination, and that this affects his artistic creation--an open recognition of the activity and principle which the surrealists struggled to liberate from the subconscious depths. In an interview with Michel Rybalka on Un Régicide, the author suggests that, in providing a basis for literature, the dream has now achieved the same visible status as the imagination. Responding to the question "Comment expliquer la richesse de l'invention fantasmatique dans Un Régicide?" he says:

> - Comme je ne me plaçais pas du tout dans une tradition romanesque réaliste je n'avais même pas à me poser la question de savoir si le monde de l'usine, ou celui de l'île, était réel ou fantasme. La vie quotidienne et la vie onirique communiquaient constamment, dans une continuité totale.[1]

As with his other statement on the use of the imagination,[2] this explanation establishes a close relationship between daily life, dream, and literature in his own work, not just in the context of a discussion of the writings of other authors such as Bousquet and Roussel.

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[1] Michel Rybalka, "Robbe-Grillet commenté par lui-même," Le Monde , 22 Sept. 1978, p. 17.

[2] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Images and Texts," p.46.

That such a perspective on his fiction should come to the fore most forcefully with the 1978 publication of Robbe-Grillet's earliest manuscript is due, in part, to his first public recognition of certain autobiographical elements in his work, including a youthful dream:

> Je peux reconnaître aujourd'hui d'une façon précise ce qui est ici autobiographique: l'usine est celle où j'ai travaillé pendant deux ans à Nuremberg, en Allemagne; l'île est certainement un mélange des paysages de mon enfance, en Bretange. Par ailleurs, les premières pages du livre sont la description précise d'un rêve récurrent, que j'ai fait à de nombreuses reprises quand j'avais une douzaine d'années.[3]

Robbe-Grillet's childhood dream, as it appears in Un Régicide, makes use of the action of memory as he analyses it in Bousquet's work. The past is reconstructed, and "Les témoins inattentifs peuvent seuls les confondre avec les bribes éparses, corrompues par les années et la distance, auxquelles ces constructions sont censées se rattacher" ("Joë Bousquet le rêveur," p.84). In Bousquet's work, the reconstruction of the past in the perspective of the present allows Bousquet to perceive "un monde nouveau" which is this time "retrouvé pour toujours." Robbe-Grillet's theories about Bousquet (and memory) can logically be applied to his own novels because of his revelation of the personal nature of the dream described in Un Régicide, where the hero finds himself "Une fois de plus. . . au bord de la mer, à la tombée du jour" (p. 11). Robbe-Grillet's insistence on Bousquet's employment of memory as reconstruction, rather than transcription, suggests that the contemporary author's use of his past, and his dreams, is filtered and shaped by literary form.

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[3] Michel Rybalka, "Robbe-Grillet commenté par lui-même," p. 17

The fictional theme of Robbe-Grillet's childhood is most readily apparent in two "imaginary" autobiographical fragments, one published the same year as Un Régicide, and the other in 1981, a content which should be delineated if the biographical form memory takes in his novels is to be understood. Robbe-Grillet opens the first fragment with the words (apparently referring to his literary work), "Je n'ai jamais parlé d'autre chose que de moi. Comme c'était de l'intérieur, on ne s'en est guère aperçu," immediately establishing the significance of his personal experience to the totality of his oeuvre, an unprecedented revelation.[4] The important images and emotions of his youth, revealed in this autobiographical publication, are developed in relation to geography, to various places in France he lived during his childhood. He indicated a binary opposition in the two places or landscapes which symbolize to him tranquillity and tumult: the image of the "Haut-Jura paternel" provided him with "Ordonnance. Repos. Eternité tranquille" (p. 4), while the image of the ocean near Brest, home of his maternal family, resulted in fear of "le tumulte et l'incertitude, le règne des périls sournois où les bêtes molles, visqueuses, se conjugaient aux lames sourdes" (pp. 4-5) that filled his nights with the most terrible nightmares. Thus Boris' nightmare in Un Régicide is of a journey along a beach, where he eventually fears he will be submerged by the waves, losing "ma volonté, ma vie" (pp.11-13). Both of Robbe-Grillet's images, while related to geography, are also defined in terms of sleep and dream for, even though they are autobiographical, they are in part imaginary reconstructions of memory as in certain parts of his early novels, the only difference between the novels and autobiography being the directly personal form of the latter. After describing two other important childhood images, both his bedroom in Brest with windows looking out on the countryside, and his room in Paris separated from the rest of the apartment by a red curtain--he notes that:

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[4] Alain Robbe-Grillet,"Fragment autobiographique imaginaire," Minuit, 1978, p.2. Unless otherwise noted, all references are to this essay and indicated in the text.

> J'ai l'impression d'avoir raconté tout cela, depuis longtemps, dans mes films, et d'une façon beaucoup plus juste, plus convaincante. Il est certain qu'on ne l'y a pas vu, ou si peu. Il est certain aussi que cela m'a toujours été indifférent: la n'était pas le but de l'écriture. (p.6)

He finds the fictional form of his past more convincing and valid than his attempt to produce, in writing, la verité of his childhood. While the images and the contents of his memory may enter into his fiction, memory's description is not his ultimate goal as a novelist. Nonetheless, a knowledge of these images is the first step in analysing the form taken by memory as part of the fonction créatrice of his texts.

The reason for Robbe-Grillet's exploration of the forms of memory in Bousquet's work, and his examination of his own past in his novels, is explained in the second autographical fragment. The surrealists' rationl for their research into the unconscious, the need to free the individual and the personal, is transposed in Robbe-Grillet's explication into a concern with the liberation of the new novel from tradition:

> . . . ce qui se passe dans ce tissu, le texte, c'est qu'il est à présent le territoire et l'enjeu d'un combat. Au lieu de s'avancer en juge aveugle, comme la loi divine, dans une volontaire ignorance de tous les problèmes que l'ancien roman masque et nie (celui de l'instant, par example), il va au contraire se livrer sans cesse à une exposition délibérée au grand jour, et à une précise mise en scène, des multiple impossibilités où il se débat, et qui en même temps le contituent.[5]

Like the hidden contradictions of the subconscious, the concealed problems of the novel form must be brought to light, delineated, and manipulated. The personal memories of the author are inevitably part of his fiction, as Robbe-Grillet explains in the first autobiographical fragment, and, therefore, they are a literary problem which should be confronted directly, not masked as in the traditional novels. Thus he suggests that the characters in fiction resemble, in form, the spectres and morbid apparitions of his youth, derived from such books as Lewis

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[5] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Fragments pour une autobiographie imaginaire," Nota Bene, No.2-3 (Summer 1981), pp.15-16. Unless otherwise noted all references are to this essay and are indicated in the text.

Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland[6] and Rudyard Kipling's Contes des Indes,[7] as well as the Breton legends and ghost stories recounted by his grandmother:

> Les personnages de roman, ou ceux des films, sont aussi des sortes de fantômes: on les voit, on les entend, sans jamais pouvoir les étreindre; si l'on veut les toucher, on passe au travers. Ils ont la même existence douteuse et obstinée que ces trépassés sans repos qu'un charme maléfique, ou la vengeance divine, oblige à revivre éternellement les même scénes de leur tragique destin. Ainsi le Mathias du Voyeur, dont j'ai souvent croisé sur les sentiers de la falaise, entre les touffes d'ajoncs ras, la bicyclette mal huilée , ne serait qu'une âme errante, de même que le mari absent de la Jalousie et les héros, si visiblement sortis du royaume des ombres, qui peuplent Marienbad, l'Immortelle ou l'Homme qui ment. C'est là, en tout cas, l'une des "explications" les plus plausibles qu'on pourrait apporter à leur manque de "natural", à leurs airs absents, dépaysés, en trop dans le monde, à ces poursuites têtus d'on ne sait quoi, d'où ils ne semblent pouvoir ni s'échapper ni sortir vainqueurs, comme s'ils tentaient désespérément d'accéder à une existence charnelle, qui leur est refusée, d'entrer dans un univers véridique dont on leur a fermé la porte, ou bien d'entraîner dans leur quête impossible l'autre, tous les autres, y compris l'innocent lecteur. Stephen Dedalus, l'arpenteur K., Stavroguine ou les Karamazov ne vivaient pas autrement. Ces parcours labyrinthiques, ces piétinements, ces scènes qui se répètent (même celle de la mort, qui ne peut plus jamais être définitive), ces corps inaltérables, cette absence de temps, ces multiples espaces parallèles aux déboîtements soudains, ce thème enfin du "double" auquel s'alimente tout un pan de notre littérature, et qui organise aussi bien l'Homme qui ment que l'Eden et après ou le Triangle d'or, ne doit-on pas y reconnaître précisément les signes distinctifs et les lois naturelles des éternelles régions hantées? (pp. 9-10)

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[6] Lewis Carroll (Charles Dodgson), Alice's Adventure in Wonderland (London: Macmillan, 1965).

[7] Rudyard Kipling did not publish any collection of short stories under this title in English. Robbe-Grillet may be referring to the French edition Contes des Indes, trans. René Lécuyer, Collection le disque rouge (Paris: Daubin, 1947).

Fictional personages resemble the spectres of memory, one can see them in the imagination, but one can never touch them. With the intervention of youthful ghosts in the form of fictional characters in the novel, Robbe-Grillet's ideas relate more directly to the programme of surrealism and André Breton's classification of images. The most surrealistic images are the most arbitrary, and recollections of childhood can help to summon up:

> L'esprit qui plonge dans le surréalisme revit avec exaltation la meilleure part de son enfance. C'est un peu pour lui la certitude de qui, étant en train de se noyer, repasse, en moins d'une minute, tout l'insurmontable de sa vie. On me dira que ce n'est pas très encourageant. Mais je ne tiens pas à encourager ceux qui me diront cela. Des souvenirs d'enfance et de quelques autres se dégage un sentiment d'inaccaparé et par la suite de _dévoyé_, que je tiens pour le plus fécond qui existe. C'est peut-être l'enfance qui approche le plus de la "vraie vie"; l'enfance au delà de laquelle l'homme ne dispose, en plus de son laisser-passer, que de quelques billets de faveur; l'enfance où tout concourait cependant à la possesion efficace, et sans aléas, de soi-même.[8]

The childhood image, seen by Robbe-Grillet as a spectre which raises its head in his novels, was released in literature and painting by Breton's probings, so that it could eventually finds its place in the fertile ground of the _nouveau roman_. Childhood offers "la possession efficace, et sans aléas, de soi-même," the interior self which Robbe-Grillet says is the only topic he actually speaks about.

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[8] André Breton, "Manifeste du surréalisme (1924)," pp. 55-56.

We have mentioned in the previous chapter that the metaphysical paintings of the Italian artist Giorgio de Chirico had an immense influence on both the surrealist writers and the artists, particularly the verists or imagiers. In Le Surréalisme et la peinture André Breton says, "dans l'incertitude croissante de la mission qui nous était confiée, nous nous sommes souvent reportés à ce point fixe [de Chirico] comme au point fixe Lautréamont, qui suffirait avec lui à déterminer notre ligne droite." He adds:

> Quel abbé Bremond de misère et d'horreur viendra d'ici peu nous entretenir de la peinture "métaphysique" de la peinture rêvée et, à ce propos, de tout ce que de 1910 à 1917 Chirico fit d'incomparable, et qu'il comparera? J'ai mis, nous avons mis cinq ans à désespérer de Chirico, à admettre qu'il eût perdu tout sens de ce qu'il faisait . . . . [Mais] cette ligne, dont il ne nous appartient plus désormais de nous écarter, peu importe que Chirico lui-même l'ait perdue de vue: longtemps il ne tiendra qu'à nous qu'elle soit la seule.[1]

The period of de Chirico's work that was instrumental to the development of the surrealist philosophy and method dates from 1910 to 1917; his attempts to imitate the baroque, Venetian style of painting in his later works meant that both he, and his art, were excommunicated by Breton. The imagery of his childhood predominates in the iconography of de Chirico's early work; similar images reappear in the autobiographical novel he published in 1929 entitled Hebdomeros, which draws on many of the objects and experiences of his youth.[10] José Pierre says that the story:

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[1] André Breton, Le Surréalisme et la peinture (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), p.13.

> . . . takes the form of a somnambulatory excursion through the pictorial universe of the period of his genius, the piazzas of Italy (1910-1914) with "Metaphysical interiors" (1915-1918).[11]

While a detailed explication or comparison of de Chirico's Hebdomeros and Robbe-Grillet's autobiographical statement is not feasible in view of the fragmentary nature of the latter, certain points of resemblance are worth noting. Towards the beginning of the novel de Chirico creates an oneiric atmosphere by confusing dream, imagination, and reality, the record of his climb up a large staircase to visit a dentist blurring into the "rêves de son enfance":

> . . . lorsqu'il montait avec angoisse et dans une lumière indécise de larges escaliers en bois verni au milieu desquels un épais tapis étouffait le bruit de ses pas . . . . Puis c'était l'apparition de l'ours, de l'ours troublant et obstiné, qui vous suit dans les escaliers et à travers les corridors, tête baissée et en ayant l'air de penser à autre chose; la fuite éperdue à travers les chambres aux issues compliquées, le saut par la fenêtre dans le vide (suicide en rêve) et la descente en vol plané, comme ces hommes-condors que Léonard s'amusait à dessiner parmi les catapultes et les fragments anatomiques. C'était un rêve qui prédisait toujours des désagréments et surtout des maladies. (pp. 8-9)

With the record of his childhood dreams, in an autobiographical format, de Chirico goes one step further than Robbe-Grillet; he details the phantoms which create his anguish, while the French author "n'arrivais même pas à décrire" the dream spectres which haunt his nights and fill him with the "terreur" (p. 5), which he mentions in the autobiographical section published in 1978.

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[10] Giorgio de Chirico, Hebdomeros (1929; rpt. Paris: Flammarion, 1964). All further references are to this edition of the book and appear in the text.

[11] José Pierre, An Illustrated Dictionary of Surrealism, trans. W.-J. Strachan (New York: Barron's, 1979), p.51.

While de Chirico, or Hebdomeros, does not dream of the ocean, it nonetheless plays a large part in his youthful memories. He thinks of his "jeunesse," of "ces nuits vraiments extraordinaire où des cascades de fleurs tombaient et des offrandes infinies se levaient sur les bords solitaires d'une mer dont chaque vague roulait des roses et des roses sans nombre" (p. 26). This image of the ocean, although it is part of his recollections, has a dreamlike quality, which links it with Robbe-Grillet's mention of the sea, but in the opposite mood of tranquillity, rather than tumult. De Chirico's autobiographical novel also creates an imaginary image of the mountains, the location which symbolizes rest and repose for the youthful Robbe-Grillet; de Chirico's mountains become the home of the demigods, although they are undoubtedly an extension of the setting remembered from that part of his youth passed near the Rhine River:

> Hebdomeros pensa alors à Bâle, aux ponts sur le Rhin qui roule avec une violence de torrent ses flots couleur d'émeraude. Plus loin encore des montagnes héroïques dressaient leurs cimes encapuchonnées de neige, toute brillante au soleil. C'est là-bas que se trouvaient ces fameuses cavernes habités par des demi-dieux beliqueux et vantards, tant qu'ils étaient jeunes. (pp. 21-22)

Because they are part of the scenery of the artist's past, Hebdomeros' mountains coincide with the Haut-Jura of Robbe-Grillet's youth, but as Hebdomeros imagines them to be the home of the youthful demigods, they are also linked on a fictional level to the French author's autobiography. De Chirico correlates youth with imaginary divinity, an equation which resembles Breton's connection of childhood with the most insightful and inspired aspects of the mind.

De Chirico's novel moves closer in form to Robbe-Grillet's theory about memory when he describes an incident where Hebdomeros, the child, breaks an ancient, valuable vase from Rhodes which has sat for ninety years on the top of the family buffet. Ostensibly, this is an event which makes up part of the content of Hebdomeros' recollections. However, the passage which describes the reaction of the family hints at another level of meaning:

> Ils regardaient comme des archéologues curieux regardent apparaître la statue qu'on déterre, ou comme des paléontologues passionnés regardent le fossile que la pioche a ramené à la lumiére du jour.
>
> On parlait de recoller les débris, et, à ce propos, chacun disait son mot. Certains prétendaient connaître des ouvriers spécialistes faisant ce genre de travail d'une façon parfaite de sorte qu'après rien n'est visible de la cassure. (p.15)

The piecing together of the broken vase represents the reassemblage of a monument to the past from the most literal perspective, but it also symbolizes the formulation of memory: the shattered vase may be the object of invisible repairs, but as with the partial discoveries of the paleontologists it can be never be reconstructed in such a way as to encompass the reality of its past existence. Like the memories of childhood in Robbe-Grillet and Bousquet it partakes of the present, of "un monde nouveau."

The similarities in the use of dream, imagery, and the structure of memory in Robbe-Grillet's and de Chirico's autobiographies suggest a relationship both of content and aesthetic form, involving a similar sensibilité in a literary context. Whether this relationship extends to the comparison of Robbe-Grillet's novels with de Chirico's paintings is yet to be explored, but the autobiographical likeness in image and structure indicate a similar aesthetic in their approach to childhood. So far, critical commentary on de Chiricoesque elements in Robbe-Grillet's fiction is limited to brief asides by Bruce Morrissette. His seminal book The Novels of Robbe-Grillet notes that the central square of the town in Le Voyeur has façades and a stone statue imbued with "the obsessional aspect of a de Chirico painting."[12] Morrissette's later work on Robbe-Grillet, about the author's intertextual assemblage, offers the following observation:

> Some visual influence of de Chirico also may be found in the early Robbe-Grillet(as reflected in the de Chirico reproduction on the cover of the 10/18 edition of Les Gommes); it will recur in the borrowings from de Chirico made by Magritte . . . .[13]

Morrissette also suggests that the use of certain aspects of de Chirico's painting in the early novels was unintentional; in the context of an analysis of La Belle Captive he says:

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[12] Bruce Morrissette, The Novels of Robbe-Grillet, p.77.

[13] Bruce Morrissette, Intertextual Assemblage in Robbe-Grillet, p.22. The painting on the cover of Les Gommes, Collection 10/18 (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions), 1953, is entitled Place d'Italie (Collection Jessi Milan), and depicts de Chirico's typical Italian arcades with a reclining Ariadne type statue in the square in the foreground.

> There can, of course, be no doubt that Robbe-Grillet was familiar with the art of Magritte from his début as a writer, so that a certain unintentional use of materials could have occurred, as may also have happened in the case of Giorgio de Chirico in Les Gommes and Le Voyeur.[14]

Robbe-Grillet confirms that whatever the similarity between certain images in these novels and those in de Chirico's painting, the art works are not textual generators.[15] But in the perspective of his development of surrealist concepts of memory, dream, and imagination as essential aspects of form in the nouveau roman, and his admission that he was closely acquainted with the paintings of de Chirico in the collection of Jean Paulhan at the time he wrote Les Gommes and Le Voyeur, his use of such materials may not be as unintentional as Morrissette speculates. Instead, these aspects seem to be a reworking and assimilation into the fictional form of the style and approach found in the sensibilité of de Chirico's paintings, with which Robbe-Grillet may have felt a particular affinity.

The term affinity may be defined in different ways; two of those suggested by Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary are "likeness based on relationship or causal connection" and "sympathy marked by community of interest." Robbe-Grillet's suggestion that the problem of the relationship of his work to surrealism is a question of sensibilité, indicates that the latter definition of affinity is most appropriate to this discussion; while it is possible to establish a causal connection between writer and painter through Robbe-Grillet's knowledge of the Paulhan collection, other interrelations are less definitive. Thus a similar use of dream, memory, and childhood in Robbe-Grillet's writings, and in de Chirico's paintings, can be approached most accurately as a "sympathy marked by community of interest." Evidence of this type of affinity is apparent in their autobiographical works, an affinity which points most prominently to a certain outlook on childhood as it relates to aesthetic structure. In her introduction to de Chirico's memoirs, Margaret Crosland suggests that:

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[14] Bruce Morrissette, Intertextual Assemblage, p.45.

[15] Personal interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet, 11 Oct. 1983.

> His early painting reflects a world where direct human contact has been lost--all that remains of people are statues and shadows, while the only portraits, inevitably [because of the trauma he experienced due to his father's early death], are those of de Chirico himself, his mother and his brother. A thematic analysis of the imagery in his painting and his imaginative writing reveals many striking links between the two and the classic, obsessional, sexually oriented sumbolism of dreams. My own theory is that the early paintings were projections of his deeply concealed unconscious life at the time, which, as this autobiography shows, was not a very happy one. During his early middle age the "metaphysical" painting stopped: the artist may have become aware of his inner conflicts and, since it seems they receded at the same time, he no longer expressed his unconscious feelings on canvas. At this crucial moment he wrote that impressive surrealist novel in which Hebdomeros, the hero, finds that Immortality has his father's eyes.[14]

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[14] Margaret Crosland, "Introduction," The Memoirs of Giorgio de Chirico, Giorgio de Chirico, trans. Margaret Crosland (Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971), p.8.

This is an explanation in terms of the artist's psychology of the stylistic change in de Chirico's painting that took place around 1917 (a transformation Breton and the surrealists abhorred), but it also situates the early works of art in relation to his childhood and to the themes of Hebdomeros. In order to provide a firm basis for the comparison of de Chirico's paintings with Robbe-Grillet's fiction, the exegesis of these problems in their art historical content, and in relation to surrealism, should be outlined.

When the iconography of Giorgio de Chirico's paintings of 1910 to 1917 is considered, it is relevant to analyse the level of their individual, psychic content. These works often depict settings and objects which seem to be reminiscences of de Chirico's past and particularly of his childhood. Many art critics, and particularly those who chronicle the history of the metaphysical school of painting,[17] believe that the individual, autobiographical element is of the first importance in interpreting his work. It is undeniable that the iconography of his personal past, along with the references to ancient Greece and Renaissance Italy, constitute the two vital aspects of his mode of plastic expression. As William Rubin notes of de Chirico's paintings of this period, the objects are "not *things seen* around the studio, *things remembered* from childhood. Together they constitute a symbolic autobiography."[18] The train which puffs its way through the background of many of de Chirico's paintings, including *The Soothsayer's Recompense* (1913; Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art), *The Joys and Enigmas of a Strange Hour* (1913; private collection), *The Transformed Dream* (1913; St. Louis, St. Louis Art Museum), and *The Philosopher's Conquest* (1914; Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago), suggests not only a boy's toy train, but also the importance of de Chirico's memories of his father, who was a railroad engineer. He wrote a short fictional selection entitled "Le Fils de l'ingénieur,"[19] and in his paintings elements of iconography and composition suggest the strength of his emotional attachment to his father. *The Revolt of the Sage*(1916; Private collection Mr. and Mrs. E. Estorick) and *The Melancholy of Departure* (1916; London, Tate Gallery) are two of several paintings where the instruments of the draftsman enter into the iconography, while in such a work as *Self-Portrait* (1913; New York, Alec Hillman Family Foundation) "the geometric patterns which underlie many of his compositions are directly based on the mechanical drawing forms which littered his father's desk."[20]

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[17] "The term 'Metaphysical Painting' was coined by Chirico, who used the adjective 'metaphysical' to denote the special angle of vision from which it is possible to discover the deeper significance of an object. The crux of the matter was a special kind of vision and the pictorial expression of the sense of reality underlying it." Werner Haftmann, Painting in the Twentieth Century, trans. Ralph Mannheim (New York: Praeger, 1960), II, 230.

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[18] William Rubin, *Dada and Surrealist Art*, p.132.

[19] Giorgio de Chirico, "Le Fils de l'ingénieur," *Chirico : Avec des fragments littéraires de l'artiste*, Waldemar George (Paris: Éditions Chroniques du Jour, 1928), pp.27-34.

Yet the famous painting The Child's Brain(1914; Stockholm, Moderna Museet), which the artist confirms "évoquait à la fois son père et Napoléon III . . .,"[21] depicts a threatening figure inconsistent with a completely positive relationship between father and son. James Thrall Soby observes that it is "assuredly . . . one of the most alarming (in the literal sense of the word) paintings in the long history of art," analysing the picture in terms of a Freudian, Oedipal complex, as a frightful commentary on parenthood:

> The Child's Brain is one of the most implacable images in de Chirico's early art. It is usually accepted as a portrait of the artist's father, motivated by childhood fears of parental authority. The figure is terrifying in its flabby pallor and in the hideous masculinity of its jet-black moustache, eyelashes and hair. Its eyes are closed, as Robert Melville has said, "for the simple reason that the child (de Chirico) would not dare to look if they were open." Its square torso, with long dough-like arms prophetic of the painter's later mannequin figures, presses forward against a green table. On the table appears a yellow-brown book, closed on a scarlet marker. And whatever the shortcomings of a psychoanalytical reading of iconography without supplementary evidence from firsthand sources, perhaps we must in this case accept the widely held theory that the book and marker symbolize the father's desire and the mother's acquiescence. The theory is confirmed by the placing of the marker in relation to the torso; the entire picture is fraught with a Freudian malaise.[22]

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[20] James Thrall Soby, The Early Chirico (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1941), p.4.

[21] Marcel Jean, Histoire de la peinture surréaliste (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959), p.47.

[22] James Thrall Soby, Giorgio de Chirico (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1955), pp.74-75.

The importance of de Chirico's painting to the surrealist group is marked, among other ways, by the fact that Breton published a retouched reproduction of the work showing the father with his eyes open. When it appeared in 1950 in the Almanach Surréaliste du Demi Siècle[23] he "took typical surrealist delight in the fact that the change went unnoticed by nearly all the Almanach's readers."[24] The influence of de Chirico's The Child's Brain is also evident in Max Ernst's painting Revolution by Night (1923; London: Collection Roland Penrose) in the form of the man with a moustache, eyes closed, bowler hatted, and holding in his arm an adolescent boy, or a mannequin. Ernst's reference in this work to the art of the Italian artist is not surprising in the light of his acknowledgement of the tremendous emotional and intellectual impact he felt upon being introduced to de Chirico's paintings through reproductions in the Italian periodical Valori Plastici in 1919. He wrote:

> There I had the sensation of recognizing something which had long been familiar to me, as when a sudden sense of already having seen a thing reveals to us a whole realm of our own dreamworld which by a kind of censorship, we had refused to see and understand.[25]

Revolution by Night also reveals the complexity of Ernst's relationship to his father. Ernst's three visions of halfsleep, "History of a Natural History," originally published in the October 1927 issue of La Révolution Surréaliste (No. 9-10), contain a lengthy passage about the artist's terrified and negative attitude towards his father. After depicting his father as a strange painter yielding a whip, he says:

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[23] André Breton and Benjamin Péret, eds., "Almanach surréaliste du demi siècle," La Nef, Special Issue, No. 63-64 (March-April), 1950.

[24] James Thrall Soby, Giorgio de Chirico, p.149.

[25] Quoted in Gaëton Picon, "Surrealists and Surrealism, p.32.

> One day, at the age of puberty, in examining the question of how my father had conducted himself in the night of my conception, there rose in me, as if in response to this question of filial respect, precise and irrefutable, the memory of that vision of half sleep that I had forgotten. For a long time afterward I was unable to disengage myself from a quite unfavorable impression of my father's conduct on the occasion of my conception, an impression perhaps unreasonable and unjust, but carefully thought over . . . .[14]

The Revolution by Night is one of a series of Ernst's paintings about the problems inherent in the interaction between father and son, although the other works do not derive their iconography directly from The Child's Brain. Oedipus Rex (1922; Paris, Private Collection) depicts a large hand holding a walnut, pierced by arrows, obviously symbolizing an eye, as well as the horror of Oedipus' punishment for his sexual relationship with his mother, an indication of Ernst's subliminal desires and fears. Two Children Being Threatened by a Nightingale (1924; New York, Museum of Modern Art) marks the culmination of the series dealing with repressed, infantile sexuality, as well as his assimilation and synthesis of "Chiricoesque illusionism and

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[14] Max Ernst, "Beyond Painting," trans. Dorothea Tanning, Max Ernst: Beyond Painting and other writings by the Artist and his Friends, The Documents of Modern Art. (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc., 1948), p.4.

Dada collage";[27] the painting shows two children, one being carried away by a sinister figure perched on top of a wooden building and the other, an older girl, running away from the house. Although this painting is in the verist style, Ernst occupies a special position between the two branches of surrealist painting, automatism and verism, but the group of works produced during the early period are clearly marked both by collage and by de Chirico's illusionistic style, unlike the later art which employed the technique of "frottage" and its variant, "grattage."[28]

The most important point about Max Ernst's surrealism for the purposes of this discussion, however, is that de Chirico's influence on Ernst is apparent in the pictorial depiction of a threatening father figure, calling attention to the impact on the surrealist painters of his visual conception of the parent and child relationship. In the critical literature on de Chirico there are frequent attempts to define the degree of subliminal, passive childhood sexuality to be found in the paintings of 1910 to 1917. For instance, Marcel Jean enlarges upon Breton's commentary that the towers and arcades, with which de Chirico's works are replete, express the relationship between the two sexes:[29]

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[27] William Rubin, Dada and Surrealist Art, p. 146.

[28] "Frottage, a technique consisting of placing a sheet of paper on a rough surface and rubbing over it with soft pencil or crayon, thus producing an impression of the surface on the paper . . . . Ernst used wood, leaves, fabrics, and other materials," Follett-Larousse Concise Encyclopedia of Modern Art, p.86. "Grattage" or scraping is a variant of this.

> Si, comme le pense André Breton, le jeu des tours et des arcades exprime le rapport du sexe masculin et du sexe féminin, "les premières justifiant des titres qui tournent autour de la nostalgie, les secondes des titres qui insistent sur l'énigme", il semble qu'on puisse attribuer une valeur plus précisément maternelle aux arcades: La Caserne du marin, Les Amusements d'une jeune fille, Les Jouets du prince , etc., ces toiles donnent l'impression que leur auteur, le peintre-enfant, vient de s'enfuir en abandonnant ses jouets ultracivilisés au pied des menaçantes arcades. La sensation perpétuelle d'être en faute, non pas envers la mère (nous avons dit avec quel despotisme Mme de Chirico régnait sur ses enfants), une sorte de panique devant le sphinx maternal, fut sans doute une obsession majeure chez Chirico.[30]

The despotism of de Chirico's mother is generally acknowledged, which makes the depiction of the father in The Child's Brain more relevant to a Freudian complex than to the indication of the personality of the engineer; in reality, the mother was the most alarming figure. Breton's and Jean's interpretation of de Chirico's paintings in the light of his childhood sexuality derives largely from the attempts of the surrealists to find sexual significance of his paintings:

> Establishing the presence of sexual implications in de Chirico's imagery was important to the Surrealist critics, for in their view it was proof, to the unbelieving of the Freudian revelation, which was still largely unknown in the French intellectual community or, where known, generally unaccepted. Sexual liberation became an important aspect of the Surrealists's program for the "total liberation of the individual" and led to their manifesto Hands Off Love, in support of Charlie Chaplin during his

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[29] André Breton, Anthologie de l'humour noir (Paris: Éditions du Sagittaire, 1950), p. 290.

[30] Marcel Jean, Histoire de la peinture surréaliste, p. 50.

> prosecution in a paternity case. Curiously, however, the biographies of most of the Surrealists reveal no more flouting of sexual convention than obtained among other groups of modern artists (the Cubists, for example); Breton was known for his almost puritanical prejudices in actual life . . . .[31]

William Rubin points out, however, that two problems exist in such an approach to de Chirico's work: firstly, "critics agree that none of de Chirico's icons were consciously intended by him as sexual symbols," and his painting is thus "naive and inspirational," and, second, "we cannot psychoanalyze paintings, we can only be sure of the manifest implication of the objects."[32] He thinks that the definition of the degree of sexuality in de Chirico's art is unjustifiably prominent in the critical literature.

The threatening father figure is implicit in Morrissette's analysis of the Oedipal story, as it appears in Les Gommes, adopted from Sophocles' play Oedipus Rex. He notes that allusions to Oedipus and to Sophocles' are too numerous to be discussed exhaustively, but he mentions the riddle of the Sphinx, the abandonment of Wallas (Oedipus) in childhood, and references to the chariot in which Laius (Oedipus' father) was slain (in the inscription on the pedestal of a statue), as well as the various examples of oracles, prophecy, and fortune telling.[33] The publication of Un Régicide strengthened the possibility of Oedipal connotation in Robbe-Grillet's fiction according to Ilona Leki:

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[31] William Rubin, Dada and Surrealist Art, p. 132

[32] William Rubin, Dada and Surrealist Art, p. 132.

[33] Bruce Morrissette, The Novels of Robbe-Grillet, pp. 53-57.

> The clearly Oedipal situation in Un Régicide [the relation between Boris and the King] transforms a few years later in Les Gommes into references not to an Oedipal complex but to Sophocles' play Oedipus the King, in which the structure of the play and the events and characters in it become raw material for Robbe-Grillet's novel . . . .
>
> The psychological reading of Les Gommes made possible by Morrissette's analysis of the novel's references to the Oedipal myth becomes more compelling with the publication of Un Régicide in which father images must be eliminated in order to secure the happines represented by union with female figures. Robbe-Grillet remembers his relationship to his father as warm and supportive although he acknowledges that allusions to father figures permeate his work and lend support to the argument that much of his work is psychologically rooted in an obsession with Oedipal problems. The fact that Robbe-Grillet used Oedipus the King as a source of Les Gommes indicates his own awareness early on of the significance of Oedipus to him. Throughout his career he has continued to be aware of and consciously to manipulate his obsessions in his writings. Certainly this manipulation is clear in his treatment of women in the works from his second and third periods in which women are always more or less beautiful, mobile mannequins. In Souvenirs du triangle d'or he pays homage to the Oedipal father of Un Régicide. Good King Boris reappears surrounded by the black crows which appeared in Un Régicide: as the revolutionary insurgents invade the palace to assassinate him, he tries to make their task easier by striking the pose he has in the official portrait of himself, the portrait from Un Régicide which Boris kept pinned to his bedroom wall. The father figure knows his role in the Oedipal drama; he must be eliminated.[34]

If one accepts Leki's interpretation that Boris plays out the Oedipal story in his attempt to assassinate the king, there are certain suggestive, iconographical similarities between de Chirico's depiction of the father in The Child's

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[34] Ilona Leki, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Twayne's World Author Series, No. 682 (Boston: Twayne, 1983), pp. 155-56.

_Brain_ and the description of the photograph of the king, which Boris purchases obsessively, "au moins . . . [une] dixième fois" (p. 99). The newspaper reports about the king describe him as an admirable figure: gay, friendly, and interested in drama and poetry. But when Boris closes his eyes to sleep, this image is transformed, "ses traits changent sans cesse, pour se figer de temps à autre en une série de grimaces tantôt grotesques et tantôt effrayantes . . ." (pp. 76-77). The phrase "Ce roi, qui était _le sien_" establishes a very personal relationship between Boris and the king, as possessive as that between son and father, causing him to become a menacing figure of Oedipal proportions.

After Boris dreams of the king in this frightening image, he buys a colour photograph of him, depicted in detail in the text:

> C'était du papier glacé très ordinaire, orné de couleurs désastreuses dans les mauves et les rouges vineux; le visage lui-même avait une curieuse teinte lilas, la barbe était lie de vin. Mais le sourire malicieux paraissait bon à première vue, quoique un peu figé, et les yeux bien vivants. (pp. 97-98)

The visual depiction of the king now seems to reflect Boris' feelings towards him as a threatening father figure, another example of the subjectivity of _Sicht_ which delineates man's relationship to the world. After Boris hangs the picture on the wall of his room, "le sourire malicieux" becomes diffused to an expression of irony:

> L'homme regardait Boris en souriant comme s'il devinait ses pensées. Il semblait que son expression ironique se fût accentuée: dans la boutique, le

> visage était plus fermée, plus conventionnel. Peut-être était-ce dû au bord blanc qu'il avait découpé . . . . ou bien à l'éclairage différent? (p. 103)

The terms of visual language, such as lighting and background, serve to define Boris' timidity and fear when confronted with a father image. Apparently, it is the elements of pictorial composition, the formal aspects, which delineate Boris' subjectivity in the preceding passage. When Boris sits on his bed to examine the photograph, the subjectivity of visual perspective comes into play; Boris imagines the king's reaction when faced with an assassin's gun:

> Le sourire se figeait, ressemblait plutôt à une grimace, telle qu'en ferait celui qui découvre tout à coup le canon d'une arme à feu braqué dans sa direction. (p. 103)

Boris has moved back from the photograph on the wall, towards the bed, and in so doing the adjustment in optical perception, perhaps less clear and definitive, because of the distance, allows him to imagine that the king's smile changes to a grimace of fear.

When Boris turns out the light to sleep, the fact of the father figure takes on its most intimidating expression yet, placing the grotesque image Boris simply imagines earlier in the novel, as he falls asleep (pp. 76-77), in relation to its reproduction in the photograph, a visual artifact. The light is extinguished, and in that ominous shadow:

> Le visage accentua son rictus, en même temps les prunelles se mirent à briller d'un éclat

> insupportable, sûres d'emporter avec elles dans la tombe une vérité que plus personne ne pourrait connaître . . . Boris détourna la tête.
>
> Alors une espèce de rire se fit entendre, secouant l'air de la chambre comme une armée investit une place. L'image grandissait dans la pénombre, les yeux brûlaient comme des phares, la bouche s'entrouvrait pour parler . . . (pp. 103-04)

The apparition which startles Boris in the darkness threatens to haunt him even after death, the psychological structure of the Oedipal complex being such that in death, as in life, the father figure remains a horrifying, if imaginary, spectre. Boris' very soul is penetrated by the burning eyes of this figure, who maliciously laughs in the knowledge that the son cannot escape emotionally, even if he goes so far as to murder the father. The image conjured up in this text shows that Boris is "invaded by the hatred, fears, jealousies and desires of childhood,"[35] the exact words Robert Melville uses to describe de Chirico's painting between 1911 and 1917. Boris' imaginary perception of the father figure/king strikes terror into his heart, fear he at first tries to cope with by turning "la tête vers le mur" (p. 104), away from the photograph on the wall. Later in the novel he tears up the picture twice:

> Boris enleva soigneusement les punaises, déchira l'image avec méthode, en mit les morceaux dans le cendrier . . . . (p. 172)

> [Boris] chercha une occupation, se dirigea vers la photographie du roi pendue au mur et, l'ayant décrochée, la déchira trés calmement. (p. 173)

This act of destruction by which Boris seeks to efface his fears, is not the simple gesture which would be implicit in tearing up two of the ten photographs he purchased, for only one photo is ever hung on the wall. He demolishes the single image which has provoked imaginary horror in the darkness, and in his dream.

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[35] Robert Melville, "The Visitation - 1911-1917," London Bulletin, No. 18-20 (June 1940), p. 7.

The desire to assassinate the father/king is satisfied in part by the shattering of his image, Boris' action serving as a counterpart to de Chirico's malicious depiction of his father in The Child's Brain - a release of hatred and jealousy. Melville's analysis of the painting is more forceful than Soby's about the negative, childish feelings that the work depicts; "It is a jealous and malicious image of the father, and we see him as Ham saw his father, Noah, 'uncovered within his tent'."[34] Melville's comment suggests that he may have been aware of Ernst's unfavourable attitude towards the nudity and sexual activity of his father apparent in Ernst's statement about his childish feelings, quoted above; Ernst's "History of a Natural History" was originally published in 1927, and the Melville article in 1940. Melville's art criticism may be influenced by the surrealist painter's interpretation of de Chirico's The Child's Brain, emphasizing the destructive emotions of the child, rather than the evil of the Oedipal father figure:

> A curtain has been drawn aside to reveal a middle-aged man stripped of every emblem of authority except his comic moustaches and little rag of a beard. Nothing could be more ludicrous than this flabby naked father, and here again my feeling that the child is beside me is reinforced by the

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[34] Robert Melville, "The Visitation," p.8.

> peculiar potency of the image . . . . This likeness, conceived in reckless and unforgivable mockery, is a deliberate invasion of the father's privacy and if the eyes were open they would be filled with the knowledge of what had been done. They are sealed by the child's instinct of self-preservation. The father has a criminal power of retaliation and must therefore remain unaware of his shaming.[37]

Indeed, it is the open eyes in the king's photograph which most terrify Boris, which penetrate his thoughts. The pupils which shine unbearably bright comprehend "une verité que plus personne ne pourrait connaître" (p. 104), Boris' desire to murder his father. In Un Régicide the crime of the adult Boris is to contemplate the murder of a father figure, in The Child's Brain the transgression of the child is to imagine the father as human, helpless, and stripped of authority. In both the novel and the painting "the manifest implication of the object," the Oedipal father, is an obsession with the adult figure, which influences thematic content. A parallel exists between Robbe-Grillet's and de Chirico's representation of real, fond and supportive fathers, as Oedipal monsters in an aesthetic context. As artists they are not concerned, in this example, with mimesis, but with the imaginative transformation of personal experience.

The original title of The Child's Brain was The Ghost[38] strongly suggesting that de Chirico integrates fantasy with the operations of memory. The connotations of the word ghost bring the spectral features of the work vividly to the fore: the dead man (the father) returns to earth or else is caught in limbo, deeply disturbed and unsettled - perhaps because he was unable to say farewell to his own country, Italy, before his death (de Chirico's father died in Greece), or because he has left undone important deeds of a personal nature (connected with his son). Indeed the figure seems to be encaged, caught between the curtain, which also resembles a Greek column, on one side and the Italian arcades on the other, architecturally representative of the two countries in which the father lived and worked, and, therefore, possibly symbolical of conflict both in life and in death. In such a ghostly atmosphere of a soul trapped in limbo, the blueness of the sky outside the window has an unreal hue and the brilliant red of the chimney is so exaggerated as to seem a dream colour, both emphasizing by contrast the dead, white and grey shades of the human form. This shading also contributes to the disembodied sense of the figure, for with only the head and torso showing, the rest of the body being hidden behind a table, it is impossible to be sure whether this spectre is rooted to the ground or floating in the air. The closed eyes, in this context of de Chirico's fantasy of a phantasmic father, suggest not so much an inability to see, but a sight that is fastened on another world in a dual sense: the inner or spiritual world and the universe of life after death. The book on the table lies closed for, as representative of the human creation, the written word no longer has any relevance for this spectre whose senses now dwell on the enticements or punishments of heaven or hell.

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[37] Robert Melville, "The Visitation," p. 8.

[38], Marcel Jean, Histoire de la peinture surréaliste, p.43.

From the preceding analysis it is apparent that the elements of the past depicted in The Child's Brain originate in de Chirico's imagination, as well as in his memory and transformations of childish eroticism, in a vision haunted by chimeras of death and the afterlife. In constructing a life beyond the grave for his father and in reconstructing childhood recollections, one may speculate that de Chirico arrives at a certain reconciliation with a loss that had grieved him deeply; the integration of memory and imagination provides the holistic perspective on childhood manifested in The Child's Brain.

De Chirico's personal, infantile sexuality merits attention in its aesthetic, but not its private form; the same may be true in the case of Robbe-Grillet. Although with the publication of his first "Fragment autobiographique imaginaire," he finally makes public certain facts about his life, the use of the term imaginary must be given due consideration. He makes the following tongue in cheek remark about his sexual complexes:

> N'importe quel psychanalyste amateur aura reconnu, non sans plaisir, dans cette opposition facile du Jura et de l'Atlantique--doux vallon au creux garni de mousse, versus trou sans fond où guette la pieuvre--les deux images traditionnelles et antagonistes du sexe féminin. Je ne voudrais pas qu'il s'imagine l'avoir découverte à mon insu. Signalons-lui, dans le même goût, la ressemblance phonétique de la vague et du vagin; et aussi l'étymologie du mot cauchemar, dont la racine mare

> désigne la mer en latin, mais en néerlandais les fantômes nocturnes. (pp. 5-6)

The sexuality most readily apparent in Robbe-Grillet's statements about his novels and films is not the repressed, infantile sexuality of the child (that is, the sexual symbols of the mountains and the ocean), but the erotic desires of the adult male. Guy Dumur, in a 1970 interview with Robbe-Grillet, confronts the author with the suggestion that his use of sadism and eroticism as themes in *Projet*, is not nesessarily only a matter of giving literary structure to social stereotype, as Robbe-Grillet usually insists. Guy Dumur remarks:

> Il y a dans votre dernier roman une accumulation de scènes sadique. Elles ne sont pas aussi nombreuses dans les romans populaires que vous prétendez démarquer. Pas aussi systematiques, en tout cas.[39]

Robbe-Grillet may explain away his fictional use of sado-erotic imagery as a way of revealing the odious mask of virtue prevalent in contemporary society, but he adds, "Y a-t-il des image sadique dans ma propre tête? Bien sûr! Dans la vôtre aussi."[40] On the treatment of "le corps de la femme" in *Souvenirs du triangle d'or* he admits:

> Il y a dans tous mes romans un attentat contre le corps, à la fois le corps social, le corps du texte et le corps de la femme, tous trois imbriqués. Il est certain que, dans la fantasmatique mâle, le corps de la femme joue le rôle de lieu privilégié pour l'attentat. Mes fantasmes sado-érotiques, je n'en ai nullement honte, je les mets en

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[39] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Le Sadisme contre la peur," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 19 Oct. 1970, p. 48.

[40] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Le Sadisme contre la peur," p. 48.

scène . . . .[41]

In spite of the fact that images of Robbe-Grillet's childhood appear in Un Régicide, Les Gommes, and Le Voyeur, if youthful sexuality should enter into an interpretation of these novels, it is not in the form of an analysis of infantile complexes, but rather of these obsessions as they manifest themselves in adult life.

Whatever the questionable nature of Robbe-Grillet's assertion that the sadistic images of his imagination may be extended to the male population in general, the primary goal of the eroticism in his fiction is, at least according to him, the construction of the novel, not the development of a theme. Eroticism is another form of fonction créatrice, it helps create the narrative structure in a manner similar to visual description. In a discussion with Germaine Brée he is emphatic about the importance of eroticism to the deep structure of the text:

> I think that works in general, my works, particularly narratives . . . are in any event erotic activities, that is to say, produced by Eros and addressed to the Eros of others. The classifications "erotic work/nonerotic work" seems utterly absurd to me. Back when Les gommes came out, people talked only about the mania for description in my novels. I had found a sentence in Kafka's Diaries where Kafka says that the act of description is an erotic act, in the way the sentence espouses the form of the object. The thing that make an enormous impression on me was precisely the fact that there is something typically erotic in this manipulation of words with such care, such insistence. And may be those works which are the most openly erotic turn out to be the least erotic, since ultimately there must be some sort of release

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[41] Michel Rybalka, "Robbe-Grillet commenté par lui-même," p. 22.

> caused by the disclosure. As a result, to take an extreme, *Dans le labyrinthe* would be a more erotic work than *La maison de rendez-vous*.[42]

Only a close analysis of his texts can determine the degree to which eroticism as structure, rather than theme, manifests itself in the novels. From the theoretical standpoint, apparent in Robbe-Grillet's reponse to Germaine Brée's question about his understanding of "the link between eroticism and literary creation,"[43] the precise manipulation of words, paralleled with the precise manipulation of the body in the sexual act, delineates the eroticism of the text.

Robbe-Grillet's attitude towards eroticism, on a social level, has one thing in common with the erotic sensibility of the surrealists, for whom the anarchical pursuit of sexual licence, whether in life or in literature and art, was part of their determined plunge into the irrational. In his book on dada and surrealism Bigsby summarizes the import of eroticism for the surrealist movement:

> The erotic is by its very nature subversive. It reclaims an area of experience effectively denied by official culture. Pornography is not only an attempt to flout middle-class tastes and standards; it is an experiment in testing the extremes of human sensibility in a society which values moderation above a truth which can only emerge from the frontier of experience. (p. 73)

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[42] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "What Interests me is Eroticism: An Interview with Germaine Brée," *Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Context/Critical Texts*, eds. George Stambolian and Elaine Marks (Ithaca: Cornell Un. Press, 1979), p. 88.

[43] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "What Interests me is Eroticism," p. 87.

The idea of oppression, embodied in sexual repression, is also implicit in certain comments by Robbe-Grillet:

> There has been for a long time in our society a kind of Judao-Christian puritanism which has played an important role . . . . which has multiplied the problem [of eroticism] . . . . If you've seen the stuff that's been written about Histoire d'O! They're getting to the point of saying that it would be immoral for a girl to have herself beaten if she felt like it! But why shouldn't she? In the name of what moral I ask you? Why should there be a Ministry of Women's Affairs with Françoise Giroud or somebody else in charge, to say: "Forbidden! That's forbidden by the law!" It's puritanism, it's puritanism, and I think its gotten so excessive now that we're going to have to come around to something else.[44]

Eroticism is for Robbe-Grillet, as well as for the surrealists, a form of social subversion, and he is definitive about the aspect of society which he wishes to subvert -- puritanism -- with all its inherent and dangerous oppression.

Love, of course, does not enter into Robbe-Grillet's equation -- eroticism equals fictional structure -- a fact which highlights his literary development beyond surrealist concepts. To Breton it was extremely important that the sexual act was related to the instinct for love, which invested sex with a special power and meaning. J.H. Matthew's study An Introduction to Surrealism delineates the place of love in the surrealist experiment:

> In Arcane 17, where Breton significantly refers to love as a state of grace, is to be found the important statement: "The act of love, just like the picture or the poem, is disqualified if, on the part of the person giving himself to it, it does not presuppose entering into a trance." The state of

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[44] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "What Interests me is Eroticism," pp. 89, 98.

> trance, so well suited to precipitating dream experience, favoring automatic revelations and hallucinatory encounters with the irrational and the marvellous, is that most favorable to the full realization guaranteed by love.[45]

Like automatism, eroticism and love were methods, means to an end which involved the revolution in consciousness. With Robbe-Grillet eroticism (minus love) is the means to an end as well, is a goal which embodies literary form rather than emotional and intellectual awareness. Love, as creative method, is omitted by Robbe-Grillet because it is a common form of humanistic complicity to pretend that love allows for the independent and separate existence of the woman, when she is perceived by her lover. Such complicity usurps any acknowledgement that man creates a love object through his subjective impressions, and does not lend itself to the independent *fonction créatrice* of a text where eroticism is primarily structure, and only secondarily content, which would be more likely to involve love.

For Robbe-Grillet daily life constantly interacts with, and is filtered through, dream and imagination, a principle he applies to human sexuality as well as to everyday things:

> In any event, what interests me is eroticism, that is, sexuality to the extent to which it is filtered through the imagination; that is, to which it is an activity not of the sexual organs, but of the brain.[46]

Sexuality, memory, and dream, all pass through the author's

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[45] J.H. Matthews, *An Introduction to Surrealism* (Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1965), p. 154.

[46] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "What Interests me is Eroticism," p.99.

"imaginary" to undergo transformation before their use and production in a literary text. In de Chirico's paintings imagination diffuses infantile sexuality so that it may be related to the psychic state of childhood in general. Marcel Jean quotes de Chirico, in the original French, from a manuscript in the collection of Paul Eluard:

> Il ne faut pas oublier. . . qu'un tableau doit toujours marquer le reflect d'une sensation profonde, et que profond signifie étrange, et qu'étrange signifie peu connu ou tout à fait inconnu. Afin qu'une oeuvre d'art soit vraiment immortelle, il est nécessaire qu'elle aille complètement au-delà des limites humaines. De telle façon elle s'approchera du rêve et de l'esprit enfantin.[47]

The link between dream, childhood, and aesthetic creation is similar to that found in both de Chirico's and Robbe-Grillet's autobiographical publications, but the "sensation profonde" which underlies all three orginates in the imagination. De Chirico again pairs childhood and dream in a text from his Memoirs:

> From that extremely remote memory of infancy, from that dark and gloomy room which I see again as one sees a dream again within the mind, there emerges a symbol that is minute and tremendous, a symbol of perfection: the little gilded discs each with a hole pierced in the centre, from my mother's Oriental head-dress.[48]

The image the artist recalls from the reality (or dream) of his childhood is also an infinitely suggestive symbol, verbally and visually: de Chirico does not merely reassemble memory, he reconstructs it and opens a creative door.

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[47] Marcel Jean, Histoire de la peinture surréaliste, pp. 53-54.

[48] Giorgio de Chirico, Memoirs, p. 14.

Norbert Lynton states of the metaphysical painters, "The imaginative value of what we call reality has nowhere been shown more convincingly,"[49] adding that according to the Italian critic Soffici de Chirico's reconsideration of objects could be defined as "the language of dreams."[50] Given the Italian artist's belief in the direct relationship between childhood, dream, and creative inspiration, it seems logical to consider the objects of his past which appear in the metaphysical paintings as mediated by the dream content, and by imagination.

Certain iconographical elements of de Chirico's childhood, and other periods in his life, that are essential images in his metaphysical paintings, also make an appearance in Robbe-Grillet's Les Gommes. Bruce Morrissette has identified the painting which hangs above the sixteenth step in the staircase of Dupont's house, as a description of the sixteenth trump card of the tarot pack, "La Maison-Dieu."[51] Yet with a slight glissement the image could also relate to de Chirico's series of three paintings of a high tower, begun in 1913 and finished early in 1914. While the tower in Dupont's painting is described as ruined, in contrast to the Italian artist's carefully modelled structures, all three of the de Chirico pictures depict two tiny figures standing at the bottom of the edifice. Two men appear, as well, in Robbe-Grillet's descriptions. In the first passage "à son pied on distingue deux homme couchés, endormi malgré le vacarme; ou bien foudroyés?" (p.14), while, as it is finally described in Les Gommes at the foot of the ruined tower, "que l'orage illumine d'un éclat sinistre, gisent deux hommes" (p. 235). Though the painting is mentioned four times in the novel (see also pp. 30, 140), details either vary, develop, or are repeated from one passage to the next. Variation is found in the difference between the opening scene and the last scene: at first, the men seem to be either asleep or struck by lightening, but finally it is confirmed that they have been dealt a death blow by the storm. Development of the image occurs through the addition of detail about the two men, about whom no information is given in the first description; towards the end of the novel the reader learns that one person is dressed royally, his crown by his side, and the other is merely a simple peasant. Continuity, or repetition, is apparent in successive reminders that the tower is ruined, and that a fierce storm rages in the painted landscape. These three descriptive techniques, variation, development, and repetition, may also relate to the historical changes in images depicted on "La Maison-Dieu" card. In Brian Innes' Les Tarots the illustrations show seven different versions of the card, only two of which depict a royal figure precipitated towards the ground; in some cards no human personages appear at all, while the crumbling tower may or may not have a door on the ground level. In all the images, however, a bolt of lightning is dramatically illustrated, usually in the process of destroying the tower.[52]

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[49] Norbert Lynton, The Story of Modern Art (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 160.

[50] Norbert Lynton, The Story of Modern Art, p. 149.

[51] Bruce Morrissette, The Novels of Robbe-Grillet, p. 58.

De Chirico's group of paintings, called by James Thrall Soby "The Tower Series,"[53] has an affinity not only with iconography of the image in Robbe-Grillet's Les Gommes -- the tower and the two figures -- the tower appearing three times in the paintings and four times in the novel, but also with the atmosphere depicted. A storm is not part of de Chirico's subject matter, but at the same time his light comes from the dream-world, rather than from the sunshine of the day, consistent with Robbe-Grillet's final suggestion that the night-time depicted in the painting in Dupont's house is "une nuit de cauchemar" (p. 235). In the first work of de Chirico's group, The Tower (c. 1913; Kunsthaus Zürich, Vereinigung Zürcher Kunstfreünde) the colouring is "grayish and somber in tonality, except for a passage of bold white";[54] the dark background, or sky, and the darkened structure on the right are in startling contrast to the sudden, brilliant strokes of light on the tower, which suggest a strong light source. Yet if the painting were mimetic it would be impossible to illuminate it in such a fashion; the brightness would have to extend to other areas of the painting. The sombre areas are analogous to the unfathomable aspects of the dream or nightmare, the lighted portions to the incongrous importance a nightmare may lend to seemingly trivial matters.

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[52] Brian Innes, Les Tarots, trans. Jean-Marie Lhote (Paris: Éditions Atlas, 1978), pp. 49-50.

[53] James Thrall Soby, Giorgio de Chirico, p. 50.

[54] James Thrall Soly, Giorgio de Chirico, p. 50.

Variation, development, and repetition also structure the relationship between The Tower, The Great Tower (1913; Düsseldorf, Kunstsammlung Nordrhen-Westfalen), and The Nostalgia of the Infinite (1913-14? Dated on painting 1911; New York, Museum of Modern Art). The Tower depicts the structure from relatively close range, so that the top of the building is emphasized, the basis of the tower remaining invisible. The building to the right obscures part of the tower, and its dark tones dominate the sombre mood of the rest of the painting, a mood which changes in The Great Tower when the building is "moved out into stronger light and to the centre of the stage."[55] Room is thus left in the foreground for the first appearance of the two diminutive figures, who seem to be threatened by the abrupt, upward slope of the plane which shapes the tower's platform. Placed side by side, the paintings The Tower and The Great Tower seem to be two stills, with emphasis on different perspectives, due to the distancing from the architecture in question, their dreamlike quality indebted to strange and illogical shadows. The Nostalgia of the Infinite marks a considerable technical and conceptual development over the other two paintings; an architectural structure reappears on the right, as in The Tower, but this time the structure is more subordinate to the tower itself. In this painting the righthand building is an arcade, serving its primary purpose as the source of the shadow which falls heavily across the foreground, an omen when contrasted with the luminosity of the tower. James Thrall Soby observes of The Nostalgia of the Infinite:

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[55] James Thrall Soby, Giorgio de Chirico, p. 50.

> The central structure in the Nostalgia is a square tower, rather than a round one, as in the two previous versions of the same general subject. And the composition is more complex than in other works of the series, and includes a number of the most effective properties of de Chirico's strange world of reverie - a foreground box or abandoned van; a portico sidling into view; a shadow cast by an unseen presence; two tiny figures dwarfed by their vast setting; ghoulish, empty windows in the tower whose pennants blow vigorously amid an atmosphere otherwise totally inert.[54]

The changes in distance, perspective, and in the shape of the tower, the appearance, and reappearance of the arcade, the discrepancies in placement of the tower, and the increasing luminosity with the consequent stress on contrast between light and shadow, constitute variation and development in the image. The repetition occurs in the insistence on the importance of shadows, and with the iconographic reiteration of the two figures and the tower with its small windows and columns.

De Chirico's imagery finds its source in the architecture of his native Italy, and in The Great Tower particularly that of the Renaissance:

The tower is, of course, a free invention, identical

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[54] James Thrally Soby, Giorgio de Chirico, p. 51.

> to that in the earlier Tower except that its windows have been shifted slightly. Its first story recalls the Temple of Vesta in Rome. But from this base rises a strange yet credible structure, as though a Renaissance architect had extended skyward the simple, Roman Temple of Vesta.[57]

The tower in Les Gommes derives from the tarot card, on the other hand, but in both cases the technique of repetition with variation serves a more extensive purpose than the creation of uncertainty or ambiguity. In the context of Robbe-Grillet's visual techniques, for example, the function of the window-pane in La Jalousie which repeatedly distorts and confuses the setting and the action, the other purposes of reiteration are not immediately evident. Considered from an iconographical point of view, however, Robbe-Grillet's repetitive use of the visual images of the tarot card, and de Chirico's successive paintings of the tower, help illuminate the importance of repetition as a code in the two instances cited, that is related to the significance of the shock value inherent in reordering aesthetic structure. To understand its consequences for de Chirico's painting, it is necessary to grasp his motivations as a metaphysical painter. The poet Alberto Savinio, de Chirico's brother, defined metaphysical art as it is connected with Nietzsche's philosophy of existence:

> Let us pause to consider the adjective "metaphysical" in as far as it concerns art, and in this case, painting.
>
> This word, already used in philosophical language to signify a balance more substantially physical than otherwise and then taken up by theologians, finds free spiritual existence for the first time in

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[57] James Thrall Soby, Giorgio de Chirico, p. 51.

> the work of Nietzsche.
>
> With the acquisition of this new and vast meaning in a vaster reality, it no longer suggests the hypothetical after-natural. It signifies everything that continues the existence of reality, beyond the crudely apparent aspects of reality itself.[54]

De Chirico and the metaphysical painters wanted to communicate the mystery generated by inanimate places and objects, to find the subjective essence of things, masked by Cartesian objectivity, and to establish its existence and credibility. Their greatest desire was for man to recognize in objects that which he had never seen before - perhaps himself.

The establishment of such a new trend in art or literature calls first of all for a disorientation which will render the familiar unfamiliar, followed by the construction of a new aesthetic. Defamiliarization is a form of shock which must destroy conventional redundancies, and create new ones, if an original aesthetic system is to be generated. Robbe-Grillet explains the problem faced by contemporary narrative literature:

> . . . I think that the narrative system which attained its apogee in the first half of the nineteenth century in France is a system which indeed remained as the organizing pole of all subsequent novelistic discourse. But it has become increasingly degraded. When I came onto the scene for example, one could still shock an academic critic. Now, only twenty years later, the difficulty faced by young writers who would like to scandalize literary criticism is enormous . . . . because the narrative system has reached the point of equiprobability -- it is inert -- as the information

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[54] Alberto Savinio, "Anadyomenon: Principles in the Evaluation of Contemporary Art," Valori Plastici, No. 4-5, 1919; rpt. in Massimo Carrà ed., Metaphysical Art, trans. Caroline Tisdall (New York: Praeger, 1971), p. 156.

> theorists say . . . . We can approach this question . . . by way of communication theory. All those who are occupied with communication theory point out that there is in a message a number of letters or even of words which are useless . . . . The coefficients of redundancy of any given language have been calculated, and each language has a redundancy which is peculiar to it. . . . This is a little bit like what happens in the narrative, for indeed the narrative code of which I spoke -- the code which sets itself up little by little against the code which is in power -- will need, in order to create itself, a certain number of redundant elements. The same effect will have to be created several times over in order for the reader, or the listener, or the spectator to be able to perceive this deviation as part of a code.[5]

The repetitive image of "La Maison-Dieu" card is a new form of redundancy, reiterated in such way as to make it recognizable as a fictional code, the obvious deviation arising in part from the insertion of a visual artifact into a verbal narrative in such a way as to make it part of the creative structure (fonction créatrice).

Robbe-Grillet hopes to destroy the remnants of the French nineteenth century narrative code through the development of new redundancies, in part dependent on a non-linear plot, in part contingent upon variation, development, and repetition in the description of a visual image and artifact in Les Gommes. Like most avant-garde artists, the metaphysical painters in their attempt to depict the "existence of reality" beyond its most crudely apparent aspects were also reacting against a nineteenth century tradition in painting which rejects elements of dream and fantasy. John Canaday, in his book on modern art delineates the problems faced by certain painters at the beginning of the century:

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[5] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Order and Disorder in Film and Fiction," Critical Inquiry, 4 (Autumn 1977), 14-15.

> Fantasists -- painter of a personal world of dream, the supernatural, and the materialization of the impossible -- have always tended to be loners or eccentric figures in the history of art. The nineteenth century -- the bourgeois century -- was particularly incompatible to them, perhaps because the persistent impulse toward fantastic expression drained off into the most exotic aspects of romanticism. But by the end of the century, with painting dominated by the mundane aspects of impressionism, the impulse toward more poetic expression was too strong to be denied. Gauguin was a near-fantasist in his search for the bizarre and wonderful, but found it less in his own imagination than by proxy as an observer of the superstitions of the South Seas. After Blake, at the very beginning of the century, Douanier Rousseau at its very end offered the first deep explorations of a world that never was. Redon, too, made exploration, and Böcklin, in pictures like The Isle of the Dead. . . tried to. But his pictures remained arrangements of costumed models posed in a stage set with stage props rather than figures of fantasy existing in another world.
>
> In the early twentieth century Böcklin's hopes came to maturity in the work of an Italian who had been born in Greece, Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978), who reached Italy by way of Munich where, as a student, he copied some of Böcklin's pictures while he was finding his way to what he wanted to do. After a period of Böcklinesque work, Chirico devised a dream world of his own as tangible as Böcklin's but free from Böcklin's fatal ponderousness.[60]

This dream world of de Chirico's employed the object as the primary instrument in establishing a new visual code of poetic expression:

> Pittura Metafisica did not contribute a new kind of painting, but a new vision of things. This group of painters experienced the world of things as alien and mysterious -- reflecting the modern attitude towards reality. There was something disquieting about the way an inanimate object, seemingly

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[60] John Canaday, Mainstreams of Modern Art, 2nd ed. (1959; rpt. New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1981), p. 457.

> withdrawn into its solemn steadfastness, could affect human emotions. Any old thing forgotten in a corner, if the eye dwelt on it, acquired an eloquence of its own, communicating its lyricism and magic to the kindred soul. If a neglected object of this kind were forcibly isolated, that is, divested of its warmth and of the protective coat of its environment, or even ironically combined with completely unrelated things, it would reassert its dignity in the context and stand there, incomprehensible, weird, mysterious.[61]

This dissociated object would be incomprehensible within accepted nineteenth century forms of art, but in terms of the new code of de Chirico and the metaphysical painters its hidden state of being is revealed through strange juxtapositions.

It is possible that "The Tower Series" represents the creation of a new code of redundancies, in opposition to the prevailing visual one, a code the metaphysical artists, and especially de Chirico, were experimenting with in their dream world. The deep shadows, cast by something concealed or unknown, and the unnatural light, "cold, precise, motionless,"[62] had never before been seen in painting; it is highly original, yet it is redundant. Varied enough in quality in the three works to validate itself as a new code, the reiteration of this strange light in the tower paintings, as well as in many other works by de Chirico, introduces an atmosphere consistent with the forcible isolation of an object. As with the lighting, the tower image is both varied and repetitive, while the tiny figures in the foreground, and the building on the right, introduce a dual, as opposed to a triple, code of disparity and recurrence. The iconographical evolution from the round to the square tower, and the increase in compositional and plastic skills that culminates with The Nostalgia of the Infinite, indicates that "the code which sets itself up little by little against the code which is in power," the code of dream painting becomes stronger, at least in the accomplishments of the individual artist.

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[61] Werner Haftmann, Painting in the Twentieth Century, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Praeger, 1960), I, 174-75.

[62] Werner Haftmann, Painting in the Twentieth Century, II, 230.

Although it is evident that the direct source of Robbe-Grillet's tower image in Les Gommes is the tarot card, the precariousness of his fictional structure, "toujours prêt à s'effondrer,"[43] makes it logical to hypothesize a glissement into the iconography of the de Chirico works, especially as the image is depicted in a painting. The dreamlike sensibility with which they are invested, and the ominous message of the shadows they depict, finds an affinity with the tone of Robbe-Grillet's "Prologue." Here several distorted images confirm a sense of foreboding, of strange and new forces about to interfere with the conventional expectations of fiction. In the mirror over the bar the reflection of the manager's face undergoes a ghastly metamorphosis; suddenly, in "la longue glace . . . flotte une image malade . . . verdâtre et les traits brouillés, hépatique et gras dans son aquarium" (pp. 1-2). The following paragraph continues the series of images, but this time the real man becomes a ghost, whose reflection flickers in the weak light of dawn, surrounded by moving and indefinite shadows, gradually disintegrating into a nebulous mist. When he later thinks of Pauline, he looks another time to the mirror, seeing his face change from a frozen "masque de gargouille," to that of a monster with one eye and contorted face, to a calm, smiling likeness, and finally to a depiction of a mouth twisted with laughter (pp. 5-6). In between the episodes when these spectres appear in the prologue, several banal events of the day take place; the manager cleans the café, speculates on the news of the death of Dupont, thinks that the stove must be lighted, attempts to wake up the guest in his rented room, and exchanges unpleasant words with a shabby customer. There is a definite break between the two sections describing the enigmatic images and that part which sets forth ordinary occurences. After the manager first contemplates himself in the mirror, he is seemingly startled out of his meditations, "Péniblement le patron émerge. Il repêche au hasard quelques bribes qui surnagent autour de lui" (p. 2). The next set of images begins with "le patron se retrouve au milieu de ses débris . . . la proie de spectres plus tenaces" (p. 5), to end on the disquieting note when he is "tiré du cauchemar par son propre cri" (p. 6), and the arrival of a customer.

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[43] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Introduction," Glissements progressifs du plaisir, p. 13.

The change in tone between these sections of the prologue is too marked to pass unnoticed. The metamorphoses of the manager's image in the mirror have the distorted, surrealist qualities of a dream or nightmare. These phantoms which appear before him are characteristic of dream forms and their appearance is delineated by transitional phases such as "péniblement le patron émerge," "le patron se retrouve," and "tiré du cauchemar," which move the character back and forth between dream and reality. The unreal, dream sequences are emphasized by particular words within them: the phantom trembling in the mirror, and the waving shadows in the first part and, in the second part, the familiar spectres, the laugh of a sleepwalker, and the sense of immobility. The function of memory is also integrated into the dream sequence when the manager recalls the dead Pauline: "le mouvement d'un bras, la musique de mots perdus, Pauline, la douce Pauline" (p. 5), who finally startles him out of his nightmare with the ironic "rire claire d'une jeune femme" (p. 6).

It must be stressed, however, that it is not the content, but the form of the dream-reality-dream succession that is most vital in understanding Robbe-Grillet's Les Gommes. As the techniques used in the introduction of the novel, it inserts the note of discord and disorientation which is the prerequisite of a new narrative code. The prologue to the novel warns that the reader need not expect traditional fictional formulas, whatever immediate and outward appearances may suggest. At first, Robbe-Grillet notes the existence of the traditional narrative code through the unconventionally exact description of actions of "le patron":

> De très anciennes lois règlent le détail de ses gestes, sauvés pour une fois du flottement des intentions humaines; chaque seconde marque un pur mouvement . . . . Chaque seconde à sa place exacte. (p. 1)

The precision of description, the exactitude in the movements of the manager, and the careful measurement of time, are far removed from the flowing and usually verbose style of Balzacian realism. The originality of the code Robbe-Grillet proposes makes it self-creating and, therefore, unpredictable: the uncertainty of the authorial imagination bestirs itself:

> Bientôt malheureusement le temps ne sera plus le maître. Enveloppés de leur cerne d'erreur et de doute, les événements de cette journée, si minimes qu'ils puissent être, vont dans quelques instants commencer leur besogne, entamer progressivement l'ordonnance idéale, introduire çà et là, sournoisement, une inversion, un décalage, une confusion, une courbure, pour accomplir peu à peu leur oeuvre: un jour, au début de l'hiver, sans plan, sans direction, incompréhensible et monstrueux. (p. 1)

In Les Gommes Robbe-Grillet conveys the message that he wishes to overthrow outmoded traditional concepts of fiction, through an aesthetic similar to that proposed by the metaphysical painters, the spectres of the dream. As Alberto Savinio asserts, "Spectrality is the true, spiritual, and substantial essence of every appearance. To reproduce this essence in its complete genuineness is the highest aim of art."[44] The spectres which dance before the eye of "le patron" hint at this essence in Les Gommes, at a breakthrough to new narrative code.

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[44] Alberto Savinio, "Anadyomenon," p. 161.

"Le faux sommeil du rêve" is important, Robbe-Grillet observes in his essay on Bousquet, because as Bousquet says, "le rêve est plus réel que la vie éveillée parce que l'objet n'y est plus jamais négligeable" (p.86). Objects, phrases, or words, removed by the dream from their habitual location in time and space, recover their unique value because false anthropomorphic constructs are acknowledged and then discarded. The concept of object and dream Robbe-Grillet refers to here may best be summarized by some of the words Werner Haftmann uses to define metaphysical painting, quoted above:

> If a neglected object . . . were forcibly isolated, that is, divested of its warmth and of the protective coat of its environment . . . . it would reassert its dignity in the new context and stand there, incomprehensible, weird, mysterious.[65]

Haftmann describes, of course, the importance and place of the object in pictorial representation, but the Bousquet passage which mentions that the dream object is never negligible refers to certain detective stories.

Robbe-Grillet quotes Bousquet:

> . . . le revolver, l'aiguille, et la pendule y résument des événements qui, sans eux, ne seraient pas. L'événement et l'objet y sont rigoureusement interchangeables, comme dans ces aventures accomplies et toutes jugées où une chambre d'hôtel raconte intégralement un crime que l'imagination policière est incapable de réinventer sur-le-champ. Et lisant des histoires criminelles, ou des pages de Raymond Roussel, nous sentons le frisson de l'homme

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[65] Werner Haftmann, Painting in the Twentieth Century, I, 175.

> entré par le biais de rapports fictifs dans la plus nécessaire et la plus exacte de ses fonctions. (pp. 86-87)

The formal context of objects in a dream, whether in the metaphysical paintings of Giorgio de Chirico, or the detective stories of Raymond Roussel are free objects which man can invest with his own imaginative conceptions, liberated from sociological, historical, and ideological constraints.

Bousquet's words about the interchangeability of event and object in the detective novel, may help explain Robbe-Grillet's choice of such a format for Les Gommes; the free reign of the fonction créatrice of the text, the consequence of such an approach, is imbued with the full potential of the imagination. Clues to the solution of a murder can appear and disappear at will; they can be fabricated, revealed as fabrications, and then metamorphosed into a semblance of reality. The notion that Les Gommes is a serious reappraisal of the form of the detective novel, and particularly its use of the object, is supported by Bruce Morrissette:

> Above all, its formalized universe of objects, related through specific "serial" analogies and functioning as supports for characters' thoughts and emotions, is what distinguishes The Erasers from an ingenious parody of the detective novel in the style of Simenon or Graham Greene. The atmosphere is often, in fact, very simenonesque: the aquarium metaphor of the bar mirror occurs, for example, in a typical Simenon passage (from Maigret and the Headless Corpse), in which similar mirrors are described in the same way: "In the bars, a greenish light made them [the mirrors] look like aquariums." Another seedy bar with a similar bizarre clientele, appears in Graham Greene's Brighton Rock, along with

> numerous other elements reminiscent of The Erasers: a weak individual who arrives in a city on a mission that subjects him to unforeseen but predetermined movements; ambiguous and confused characters' names; an enigmatic, prophetic, or riddlelike formula, repeated at significant moments in the plot; a gang leader with an Italian name; a professional man in the role of a terrified false witness (a lawyer in Greene's novel, a doctor in Robbe-Grillet's); unexplained, sinister references to the earlier death of a young woman (Molly, Pauline "the sweet"); posters and advertising signs (absurd and ridiculous in Brighton Rock, formally interesting and brought into the novel's structure in The Erasers); and even, in Greene's work, an "object" that is not only a tacit object correlative (like the gum eraser or the paperweight of The Erasers) but also perhaps a murder weapon -- the stick of rock candy called "Brighton Rock" which broken always shows the same letters and is explicitly identified by one of the characters in the novel as a symbol of human nature (an idea that is, of course, alien to Robbe-Grillet's thinking).[66]

Morrissette does not conclude, however, that the imposition of the genre of the crime story as a structure is also an ontological examination of the status of the object relevant to the dream-reality-dream form exemplified in the prologue. The particular given about the objects and their situation in Dupont's house and study allow the author to self-consciously choose one plot and one solution to the crime, undoubtedly in face of the many alternatives proffered by his imagination. But the items provided are, like details in other novels by Robbe-Grillet such as Le Voyeur, details in trompe-l'oeil; their enigmatic character is conceived, not given a priori:

> C'est dans la cuisine qu'on le fait entrer, une cuisine sans vie qui ressemble à une maquette: fourneau parfaitement astiqué, peintures

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[66] Bruce Morrissette, The Novels of Robbe-Grillet, pp.72-73.

> impeccables, série de casseroles en cuivre rouge alignées contre le mur, et si bien fourbies qu'on n'oserait pas s'en servir. Aucun indice n'évoque la préparation quotidienne des repas; les rares objets qui ne sont pas à l'abri dans les placards semblent, sur les étagères, fixés à leur place pour l'éternité.
>
> La vieille dame, habillée de noir, est presque élégante malgré ses chaussons de feutre; c'est d'alleurs là le seul détail qui montre qu'elle est ici chez soi, et non pas en train de visiter un appartement vacant. Elle fait asseoir Wallas en face d'elle et commence aussitôt:
>
> - Eh bien, quelle histoire!
>
> Mais sa voix trop forte, au lieu de paraître émue, sonne comme une exclamation maladroite sur la scène d'un théâtre. On jurerait, maintenant, que la rangée de casseroles est peinte en faux-semblant sur le mur. La morte de Daniel Dupont n'est plus qu'un événement abstrait dont discutent des mannequins. (pp. 80-81)

The objects in the novel give the plot the same status as a trompe-l'oeil painting; signification calls for an imaginative investment when the detail of objects is so extensive as to have reached the stage of opacity-transparency-opacity.

This second level of opacity, the "essence" of appearances as Alberto Savinio says, comes forth in the dream perspective of de Chirico's paintings, but exactly how carefully the Italian artist approaches the dream is seldom realized, as William Rubin points out:

> The word "dream" and such terms as "dream world" have been used indiscriminately and without qualification by critics in writing of such diverse artists as Arp, Masson, Tanguy, Matta, and Ernst. But it should be borne in mind that the imagery of dreams is not abstract, nor does it take radical liberties with the configuration of things. At most an object might be dreamed of as distorted, its perspective wrenched, but it is always an object familiar to us in our waking life. No matter how strange the juxtapositions and relationships of things in dreams, these things must all have been

> seen by the waking eye before they can become part of dreams.[47]

The forms found in the works of the other surrealists mentioned by Rubin are more fantastic than those of de Chirico, and much less like dream images. As a result, de Chirico's paintings touch more closely the universe of dreams, than the art of some of the surrealists he influenced, particularly the later works of Max Ernst. The "white light"[48] de Chirico utilizes in such paintings as The Nostalgia of the Infinite, and others, simplifies and clarifies the shapes it illuminates: an interior light which annihilates the "protective coat" of the object. In addition, the sensation of absolute silence conveying a feeling of immanent catastrophe in the universe where this strange light shines, as well as the characteristic rejection of aerial perspective and spatial illusionism[49] (for example, the foreground plane in The Great Tower), creates a "dream theatre," a stage where objects are independent of their environment. The "model" kitchen in Les Gommes, where "les rares objects qui ne sont pas à l'abri dans les placards semblent, sur les étagères, fixés à leur place pour l'éternité" (p. 80), and the pots which eventually come to seem to Wallas as "peinte en faux-semblant sur le mur" (p. 81), making the voice of the old lady sound like an exclamation "sur la scène d'un théâtre" (p. 81), suggest a similar construction of a "theatre" where objects may be manipulated at liberty, the liberty not to be found in normal, waking life. Robbe-Grillet develops a theatrical style in his description of the bar scene, or the etching, in Dans le labyrinthe, as has been noted in the second chapter; the link of theatre with a dream world adds to the purposes of the style in this novel. Not only is it a justification for the mechanical manipulation of textual elements, it also frees the "essence" of objects within the text. In other words, it points towards things as part of the subjectivity of man's Dasein, rather than their false anthropomorphic context.

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[47] William Rubin, Dada and Surrealist Art, p. 131.

[48] William Rubin, "De Chirico and Modernism," De Chirico, ed. William Rubin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1982), p.65.

[49] William Rubin, "De Chirico and Modernism," p.61.

De Chirico's dream world not only redefines the situation of the object, it is also an attack on the humanism which makes man the measure of all things in the form of the Cartesian dualism. His manuscript "Meditations of a Painter" emphatically attacks anthropomorphism:

> What will the aim of future painting be? The same as that of poetry, music, and philosophy: to create previously unknown sensations: to strip art of everything routine and accepted, and of all subject-matter, in favor of an esthetic synthesis; completely to suppress man as a guide, or as a means to express symbol, sensation or thought, once and for all to free itself from the anthropomorphism that always shackles sculpture; to see everything, even man, in its quality of thing. This is the Nietzschean method. Applied to painting, it might produce extraordinary results.[78]

Sculpture is considered by de Chirico as particularly culpable, perhaps because it is inescapably three-dimensional without the possibility of the manipulation of space and perspective that makes images on a canvas a reminder of the purely provisional nature of the links between man and his universe. De Chirico's assault on anthropomorphism in painting, finds its literary equivalent in Robbe-Grillet's offensive against humanism in fiction, the essay "Nature, humanisme, tragédie." The writer is more concerned with man's "complicity" than de Chirico, because he speaks of the tragic form in literature, but he too wishes to "suppress man as a guide":

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[78] Giorgio de Chirico, "Meditations of a Painter: What the Painting of the Future Might Be," Giorgio de Chirico, James Thrall Soby, p. 251.

> Décrire les choses, en effet, c'est délibérément se placer à l'extérieur, en face de celles-ci. Il ne s'agit plus de se les approprier ni de rien reporter sur elles. Posées, au départ, comme n'étant pas l'homme, elles restent constamment hors d'atteinte et ne sont, à la fin, ni comprises dans une alliance naturelle, ni récupérées par une souffrance. Se borner à la description, c'est évidemment récuser tous les autres modes d'approche de l'objet: la sympathie comme irréaliste, la tragédie comme aliénante, la compréhension comme relevant du seul domaine de la science. (p. 63)

Objects placed in the extraordinary perspective of the dream, whether they appear in de Chirico's paintings or Robbe-Grillet's novels, in a pictorial composition or in a fictional text, are visual images for, as Freud determined, man dreams in images, not words. Like de Chirico, Robbe-Grillet wishes to escape the falsehood inherent in man's unwitting projection of himself onto the object; in Les Gommes he accomplishes this goal by placing "La mort de Daniel Dupont" (p. 80), the "crime" and the "clues" to its solution, in a dream theatre.

Despite the fact that Robbe-Grillet and de Chirico both take the offensive against anthropomorphism on the level of the dream, the work of the Italian artist is usually considered "poetic," although the use of the term in that context is frequently nebulous. Such a poetic style would seem to contrast with the style of Robbe-Grillet's Les Gommes, that is distinguished according to Morrissette by "its formalized universe of objects." But the extraordinary juxtaposition of objects in de Chirico's dream world is formal as well as poetic. When Magritte saw The Song of Love in 1922 he was greatly impressed, apparently with the poetry of the painting:

> . . . The Song of Love which I always consider to be a work by the greatest painter of our time in the sense that it deals with poetry's ascendancy over painting. Chirico was the first to dream of what must be painted and not how to paint.[71]

In reality, however, Magritte's painting, which was so much influenced by that of the Italian artist, represents an attack on logic by logic, in a precise, verist style, and the poetry he finds so fascinating in de Chirico's painting is that which conceptualizes the new, formal relationships of objects, as opposed to, for example, Cézanne's preoccupation with the abstraction of form, the "ideal of relating all the elements of the picture to patterns both on its surface and in depth."[72] When the distant train, the ball, the sculpted head, and the glove pinned to the wall are brought together in a painting, they no longer appear as metaphorical references to a means of transportation, a plaything, a work of art, or an item of clothing. The loss of traditional metaphor is compensated, according to many art historians, by a new "poetic" metaphor, the product of isolation and dislocation.

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[71] Quoted in James Thrall Soby, Magritte, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1965), p. 8.

[72] "Cubism," Follet-Larousse Concise Encyclopedia of Modern Art, p. 58.

Massimo Carrà insists on the personal and narrative element in de Chirico's painting:

> De Chirico is primarily concerned with this narration rather than with the forms and images of the composition, and pours into it the various and contradictory elements of his adventurous and bizarre spirit. The second reality which is born of the meeting between the object and its representation is for him above all a psychic reality, consisting in the poetic emotion of the painter himself.[73]

The idea of objects imbued with the painter's psychic reality is commonplace in de Chirico criticism. But the theatrical style of the backdrop he depicts in The Song of Love does not necessarily increase the object's personal or anthropomorphic content; instead it disorients the viewer, forcing him to perceive the ontological status of the items displayed, not their significance as a reflection of the artist's personal life. William Rubin's essay on the modernism in de Chirico's painting substantiates the former approach.[74] He notes that the sculpted head in The Song of

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[73] Massimo Carrà, "Introduction: Quest for a New Art," Metaphysical Art, p. 21.

[74] William Rubin, "De Chirico and Modernism," pp. 55-79.

Love is shaped in bas-relief, with little projection from the surrounding surface. In the upper right corner of the head, the white edge denies a three-dimensional surface, pulling the object towards the flatness of the picture plane. The linear arabesques and the heavy black outline of the green ball have the same effect; the ball seems to be flat rather than round. Thus both these objects demonstrate an anti-illusionistic technique, which -- like some images in Robbe-Grillet's novels, such as the pier in Le Voyeur, at the beginning of the book, where linear perspective is disrupted, and the cement blocks under the water, at the end of the novel, that seem like trompe-l'oeil images -- deliberately stresses the artificiality (or the theatricality) of the aesthetic construction. The independent fonction créatrice of the dream image in de Chirico's painting plays a role similar to the fonction créatrice of description in Robbe-Grillet's novels, reaching forward to new visual and narrative codes, as they grasp the "essence" or subjective reality of the object.

The insular form of the object in a visual or verbal structure, seen from the perspective of the "waking dream," evokes a singular, unfamiliar clarity, a sensation de Chirico remarked upon in Arnold Böcklin's paintings:

> Every one of his works gives that sense of surprise and unease that one feels when . . . . one enters a strange city for the first time, and finds a square, a street, a house in which one seems to have been already.[75]

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[75] Giorgio de Chirico, "Arnold Böcklin," Il Convegno (May 1920); rpt. Metaphysical Art, ed. Massimo Carrà, p.

The iconography of the city is central to the Italian artist's metaphysical period, and Breton succinctly describes its great poetic importance in Le Surréalisme et la peinture, at the same time condemning him for abandoning this abode:

> Quelle plus grande folie que celle de cet homme, perdu maintenant parmi les assiégeants de la ville qu'il a construite, et qu'il a faite imprenable! A lui comme à tant d'autres, elle opposera éternellement sa rigueur terrible, car il l'a voulue telle que ce qui s'y passe ne pourrait pas ne pas s'y passer. C'est l'Invitation à l'Attente que cette ville tout entière comme un rempart, que cette ville éclairée en plein jour de l'intérieur. Que de fois j'ai cherché à m'y orienter, à faire le tour impossible de ce bâtiment, à me figurer les levers et les couchers, nullement alternatifs, des soleils de l'esprit! Époque des Portiques, époque des Revenants, époque des Mannequins, époque des Intérieurs, dans le mystère de l'ordre chronologique où vous m'apparaissez, je ne sais quel sens attacher au juste à votre succession . . . .[76]

De Chirico's was not interested in commenting on his contemporary urban scene in his art, but rather on the architecture of ancient cities; "the architectonic sense in ancient painting" influenced the Greek colonnades that frequently enclose a landscape, "as in a square or a rectangle of a window," while the work of Giotto affected the windows, doors, and arcades of his buildings in his Italian structures.[77] The nineteenth century architecture of Turin, which also fascinated Nietzsche, appears in the

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[75](cont'd) 139.

[76] André Breton, Le Surréalisme et la peinture, p. 13.

[77] Giorgio de Chirico, "The Architecture Sense in Ancient Painting," Valori Plastici (May-June, 1920); rpt. Metaphysical Art, ed. Massimo Carrà, pp. 94-95.

arcades, the statues, and especially the piazzas, or city squares, of many of de Chirico's paintings.[78] Quite a few of the paintings of city squares combine some or all of these elements: in *Melancholy* (1912; Collection Mr. and Mrs. E. Estorick), *The Lassitude of the Infinite* (1912-13; Private Collection), *The Soothsayer's Recompense* (1913; Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art), *The Joys and Enigmas of a Strange Hour* (1913; Private Collection), and *The Silent Statue* (1913; Düsseldorf, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen), a statue of a woman draped in classical Greek garb appears; in the first picture of the series the base of the statue is inscribed with the word "Melanconia." In all five of the paintings the figure is set in an empty, or nearly empty square surrounded by arcades which frequently contain high windows, all objects usually strangely disproportionate in size. In *The Soothsayer's Recompense* a clock appears above the arcade, as in *The Enigma of the Hour* (1911-12; Private Collection), where the statue is replaced by a fountain and a tiny white robed figure. In *The Anxious Journey* (1913; New York, Museum of Modern Art) arcades predominate, a small train, with a puff of smoke approaching in the background.

It is the compartmentalized, small, and personal areas of the cityscape which interest de Chirico, "a square, a street, a house." The personal perspective is important because the city is a metaphysical one, situated as much inside the head as outside it: "Une ville nous est offerte, et immédiatement interpellés, nous avons à nous situer en elle,"[79] perhaps in our dreams, our memory, or our imagination. "Real" human life is thus missing from the topography of these paintings, like the human beings whose absence is mentioned in conjunction with the first reference to a public square in the "Prologue" to *Les Gommes*. When Dupont's housekeeper arrives at the bar, her long explanation touches only a void:

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[78] James Thrall Soby, *The Early Chirico*, p. 35.

> . . . l'ivrogne se désintéressait ouvertement de l'affaire; elle paraissait pourtant vouloir atteindre, au-delà, un auditoire plus vaste, comme une foule sur une place publique; ou bien toucher en lui un sens plus profond que l'ouïe. (p. 17)

The mention of a public square, in reference to a sense more profound than that of hearing, immediately suggests an affinity with de Chirico's piazzas, which Soby describes as "quiet but breathing,"[80] and indeed the landscape of *Les Gommes* is very much that of such a city. Wallas' reaction when he first arrives in the place to investigate the crime, fits de Chirico's description of his reaction to Böcklin's paintings: "surprise and unease . . . when . . . one enters a strange city . . . in which one seems to have been already." Leaning over the railing of the bridge, Wallas' memories suddenly intrude on him towards the beginning of the first chapter:

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[79] Alain Pessin and Henry-Skoff Torgue, *Villes imaginaries*. (Paris: Éditions du Champ Urbain, 1980), p. 113.

[80] James Thrall Soby, *Giorgio de Chirico*, p. 34.

> Il est arrivé tard, la nuit dernière, dans cette ville qu'il connaît à peine. Il y est venu une fois déjà, mais pour quelques heures seulement, quand il était enfant, et il n'en conserve pas un souvenir très précis. Une image lui est restée d'un bout de canal en cul-de-sac; contre un des quais est amarré un vieux bateau hors d'usage - une carcasse de voilier? Un pont de pierre très bas ferme l'entrée. Sans doute n'était-ce pas exactement cela: le bateau n'aurait pas pu passer sous ce pont. Wallas reprend son chemin vers l'intérieur de la cité. (p. 36)

Ambiguity rears its head; Wallas has been in this city as a child, but is this an invention of memory? His recollected images are scarcely accurate, perhaps imagined rather than recalled, although on another level such impressions of the past relate to the Oedipal theme of the book. After crossing the canal Wallas continues to wander through "l'enchevêtrement des rues" (p. 37), setting the tone for the rest of his actions throughout the novel, as he wanders the streets of the city in pursuit of the solution to his problem.

Wallas' movement throughout the town indicates a certain interiorization of its geography, so thorough is his exploration of the environs:

> Lorsqu'il aura terminé ce circuit, Wallas aura traversé deux fois de part en part la ville proprement dite, à l'intérieur du Boulevard Circulaire. Au-delà, les faubourgs s'étendent largement, compacts et peu engageants vers l'est et le sud, mais aérés vers le nord-ouest par les nombreux bassins de l'arrière-port et vers le sud-ouest par des terrains de sport, un bois et même un parc municipal agrémenté d'un Zoo. (p. 53)

The centre of the city is of such interest to Wallas that he crosses it twice, ignoring the suburbs; he reintegrates himself with the estranged locale of his childhood literally and figuratively; it becomes part of his memory, dream, and imagination. Breton reminds us of "la ville qu'il [de Chirico] a construite, et qu'il a faite imprenable". Wallas also builds a city in his mind, with an iconography and an atmosphere similar to that of de Chirico's, where the central square plays an important role:

> La place de la Préfecture est une grande place carrée bordée sur trois côtés de maisons à arcades; le quatrième côté est occupé par la préfecture, vaste bâtisse en pierre d'un style à volutes et coquilles Saint-Jacques heureusement peu chargé, d'une laideur en somme assez sobre.
>
> Au milieu de la place se dresse, sur un socle peu élevé que protège une grille, un groupe en bronze représentant un char grec tiré par deux chevaux, dans lequel ont pris place plusieurs personnages, probablement symboliques, dont les poses sans natural ne s'accordent guère avec la rapidité supposée de la course.
>
> De l'autre côté commence l'avenue de la Reine, où les ormes maigrelets ont déjà perdu leurs feuilles. Il y a très peu de gens dehors dans ce quartier; les rares passants emmitouflés et les branches noires des arbres lui donnent un air précocement hivernal.
>
> Le Palais de Justice ne doit pas être loin, car la ville, ses faubourgs mis à part, n'est sûrement pas très étendue. L'horloge de la préfecture marquait un peu plus de sept heures dix, Wallas a donc trois bons quarts d'heure pour explorer les environs. (pp. 52-53)

The Place de la Préfecture bordered by arcades with a statue in the middle, is a setting related to the de Chirico series of paintings: even a clock is mentioned, although the hands of the clock on the arcades frequently point to a time around noon or early afternoon, not early evening. The atmosphere of desolation which results from the wintry look of the street in Les Gommes, parallels the feeling of de Chirico's lonely squares where human forms are sculpted or spectral, not real, while "la tranquillité gelée" of

Robbe-Grillet's landscape has an affinity with the stopped movement suggested by the clock in *The Soothsayer's Recompense*.

Wallas returns to the Place de la Préfecture several times in the novel, as he criss-crosses the city; at one point he reads the inscription on the west side of the statue's pedestal (p. 75), an iconographical element which relates it more closely to de Chirico's *Melancholy*. Another time he encounters a vehicle with a description fitting that of the train in *The Anxious Journey*:

> Un bruit de moteur Diésel se rapproche derrière Wallas . . . la trépidation finit par emplir complètement sa tête . . . . un lourd véhicule de transport routier. (p. 47)

The train in de Chirico's painting approaches from the background, yet through the artist's use of distorted, linear perspective it looms ominously, already overtaking the enormous arcades in the foreground, in much the same way the truck overtakes Wallas. The truck even trails "son nuage de fumée asphyxiante," just as de Chirico's train threatens to cloud the painting with its large puff of smoke. In *Les Gommes* such de Chiricoesque iconographical elements are present before the commencement of the third chapter, but the end of the second chapter seems to confirm that Wallas has been wandering through a city situated in part within himself, the part that is made up of memory and dream:

> Quel mauvais sort le force donc, aujourd'hui, à donner des raisons partout sur son passage? Est-ce une disposition particulière des rues de cette cité qui l'oblige à demander san cesse son chemin, pour, à chaque rèponse, se voir conduit à de nouveaux

> détours? Une fois déjà il a erré au milieu de ces bifurcations imprévues et de ces impasses, où l'on se perdait encore plus sûrement quand, par hasard, on réussissait à marcher tout droit. Sa mère seule s'en inquiétait. Ils étaient arrivés enfin à ce canal en cul-de-sac; les maisons basses, au soleil, miraient leurs vieilles façades dans l'eau verte. Cela devait être en été, pendant les vacances scolaires: ils avaient fait halte (alors qu'ils se rendaient comme tous les ans au bord de la mer, plus au sud) pour rendre visite à une parente. Il croit se souvenir que celle-ci était fâchée, qu'il y avait une affaire d'héritage, ou quelque chose du même genre. Mais l'a-t-il jamais su exactement? Il ne se rappelle même plus s'ils avaient fini par rencontrer la dame, ou bien s'ils étaient repartis bredouilles (ils ne disposaient que de quelque heures entre deux trains). D'ailleurs, est-ce que ce sont là de vrais souvenirs? On a pu lui raconter souvent cette journée: "Tu te rappelles, quand nous sommes allés . . .
>
> Non. Le bout de canal, il l'a vu lui-même, et les maisons qui se reflétaient dans son eau tranquille, et le pont très bas qui en fermait l'entrée . . . et la carcasse abandonnée du vieux bateau . . . Mais il est possible que cela se soit passé un autre jour, dans un autre endroit - ou bien encore dans un rêve. (pp. 136-37)

As in de Chirico's paintings, a town has been described and then immediately questioned; do the blind streets which lead nowhere conjure up memory or dream? The centre of this city seems also to be the centre of Wallas' interior landscape.

The city as it is perceived by Bona, one of Dupont's supposed assassins, near the beginning of Chapter Two is linked iconographically with de Chirico's pictorial approach to the town as an architectural and imaginative reminder of the past. Bona is sensible to the locale as a pictorial composition so delineated as if it were one of the "cités perdues, pétrifiées pour des siècles par quelque cataclysme" (p. 91). We have seen that de Chirico was greatly interested in depicting ancient architecture; the phrase from Les

*Gommes* could refer to a buried Italian city such as Pompeii, which when rediscovered by archaeologists was in such a preserved state. Bona sees the city as it is framed by a window-pane, a technique favoured by de Chirico as both a Greek and an Italian derivation: with the Greeks columns exemplified this framing device, while among the Italian primitive painters the squares of doors as well as windows served this purpose.[61] The chimneys and pylons which Bona sees towering over the distant suburbs are repeated in important de Chirico paintings such as *Ariadne's Afternoon* (1913; Private Collection), *Self-Portrait* (1913; New York, The Alex Hillman Family Foundation), *The Enigma of a Day* (1914; New York, Museum of Modern Art), *The Child's Brain*, and *The Enigma of Fatality* (1914; Basel, Kunstmuseum). With the actual description of cityscape in front of Bona, Robbe-Grillet returns to an emphasis on the elements of pictorial composition or visual language, rather than iconography, but as the town is framed by the window he also gives it a de Chiricoesque atmosphere.

The author creates a tone of estrangement in the image which he says is similar only to that found in a painting:

> En temps ordinaire, ce paysage paraît de profondeur très modeste et plutôt dépourvu d'attrait, mais ce matin le ciel gris-jaune des jours de neige lui confère des dimensions inhabituelles. Certains contours s'accusent, d'autres s'estompent; çà et là des espaces se creusent, des masses insoupçonnées surgissent; l'ensemble s'organise en une série de plans découpés, où le relief, soudain mis en lumière, semble du même coup perdre son naturel - et

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[61] Giorgio de Chirico, "The Architectonic Sense in Modern Painting," p. 94.

> peut-être sa réalité - comme si cette netteté trop grande n'était possible qu'en peinture. Les distances en sont tellement affectées qu'elles en deviennent à peu près méconnaissables, sans que l'on puisse dire exactement dans quel sens elles se sont transformées: étirées, ou bien réduites - ou les deux à la fois - à moins qu'elles n'aient acquis une qualité nouvelle ne relevant plus de la géométrie . . . Ainsi parfois en advient-il de cités perdues, pétrifiées pour des siècles par quelque cataclysme - ou seulement pour quelques secondes avant l'écroulement, un clignement comme d'hésitation entre la vie et ce qui déjà porte un autre nom: après, avant, l'éternité. (p.91)

The description of silhouette, outline, and distance perspective, as well as the momentary nature of the image Bona is confronted with, stresses the visual rather than the verbal nature of the description. But the "dimensions inhabituelles" refer to a break in the narrative code which includes the unusual mode of description as a diversion from the linear development of a plot, as well as the insertion in the text of the visual "artifact." The visual image as depicted by Robbe-Grillet achieves the same effect as the "shallow and vertiginous"[12] perspective of many of de Chirico's paintings, for example The Enigma of a Day. The whole prospect is organized in front of Bona as a series of planes, where the depth suddenly illuminated loses at the same time its natural look, and perhaps also its reality, refocusing "comme si cette netteté trop grande n'était possible qu'en peinture." In The Enigma of a Day a series of planes is also created: the multiple vanishing points of the arcade and the building to the right, both of which meet above the horizon line, and that of the base of the statue which disappears off the camera, contribute to a foreground which is tilted upward and flattened. Unnatural light is evinced by the contrast between the dark sky, and the brilliant piazza with its inexplicable shadows.

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[12] William Rubin, "De Chirico and Modernism" p. 58.

Robbe-Grillet indicates the break with the traditional code of narrative through the depiction of a visual image that is unreal in perpective and lighting, and overexact in detail. His method of disassociating from tradition, through the visual image, resembles de Chirico's distortion of Renaissance perspective for his own purpose. William Rubin notes that:

> Renaissance perspective projects a space that is secure and eminently traversible. De Chirico's tilted ground planes, on the contrary, produce a space that, when not positively obstructed, is shallow and vertiginous. The viewer understands fifteenth-century space as an illusory continuation of his own space; his place in relation to the *donnée* of the picture -- and thus, by extension, to the general scheme of things -- is clean and logical. And the unity of that relationship is expressed mathematically and visually in fifteenth-century perspective by its systematic focus, which draws all orthogonals to a single point . . . . [De Chirico's] multiple vanishing points . . . . subvert the coherence of Renaissance perspective by confronting the viewer with a network of conflicting spatial tensions that undermine, psychologically speaking, any initial impression of quietude or stability.[83]

This analysis explains in detail de Chirico's rupture with a code of visual perspective as it is exemplified in *The Enigma of a Day*, just as the explication of Bona's vantage point on the city in *Les Gommes* exemplifies a transformation in the narrative code: firstly through the insertion of a visual image, and secondly through a deconstruction of perspective in that image, similar to that in de Chirico's remolding of secure, Renaissance space. In both the novel and the painting the supposed security of man's personal situation in the twentieth century city collapses around him: in de Chirico's art man is displaced in time (through the depiction of ancient architecture) and in space, while in Les Gommes he experiences the uncertainty of visual perspective, when distances are transformed and extended to suggest temporal and spatial disorientation.

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[83] William Rubin, "De Chirico and Modernism," pp. 58-59.

Werner Haftmann's interpretation of de Chirico's use of space gives it an ontological significance. His examination of Turin Melancholy (1915; Milan, Carlo Frua de Angeli), which depicts a train station with a clock mounted on the front, and a train nearby, as well as arcades and a city square in the foreground, suggests that space takes on a presence that emphasizes the unsubstantial nature of the objects: space is empty, and in their attempt to oppose this void things acquire a "poetic pathos." "The archaic solemnity of their form [the architecture in Turin Melancholy] seems to disclose a mission, previously unknown to us, namely to withstand the assaults of nothingness and of the void."[84] Haftmann believes that de Chirico's sense of this void originates with his interest in Nietzsche, and the title of the painting thus alludes to Nietzsche's letters from Turin which described its architecture with a similar feeling for the void around it. Haftmann's interpretation of de Chirico's ontology would relate the conceptualization of his painting more closely to Jean-Paul Sartre's idea of "néant," than to Heidegger's notion of Nichts; Heidegger expresses the idea in Sein und Zeit that Nichts is interdependent with Dasein, but for Sartre being or consciousness is contingently suspended in nonbeing or néant.[1] Thus de Chirico's placement of the object in a void, according to Haftmann's interpretation, would relate to Sartre's existential philosophy. Robbe-Grillet goes one step further than de Chirico in his delineation of the object by insisting that it can be integrated into the void, because this very nothingness is part of the Dasein which makes objects zuhanden.

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[84] Werner Haftmann, Painting in the Twentieth Century, II, 231.

In view of Robbe-Grillet's great concentration on the formal nature of the literary aesthetic, it is not surprising that his early novels demonstrate an affinity with the visual compositions of de Chirico. As William Rubin demonstrates convincingly in the recent essay "De Chirico and Modernism," published in 1982 on the occasion of the major retrospective of de Chirico's metaphysical period held at the Museum of Modern Art, the criticism which places de Chirico as a classical painter, and that which stresses the literary and poetic imagery of his art, should be revaluated. His style, his use of perspective and the nonillusionistic modelling of objects, is peculiarly modern;

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[1] See Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Être et le néant, (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), pp. 57-59, 65, 120-21.

new meaning is communicated stylistically as well as poetically. In this sense his relationship to the surrealists and their art is similar to Robbe-Grillet in his interpretation of Bousquet and Roussel, both of whom place the surrealist aesthetic in a predominantly formal rather than conceptual situation. De Chirico's painting is prophetic of "verist" developments in surrealism, and of Robbe-Grillet's use of memory, dream, and imagination in a visual context to rework fictional form in the *nouveau roman*.

The exploration of the dream is relevant not only to the aesthetic world of the object, however, but also to the aesthetic universe of memory and childhood, as we have seen in Robbe-Grillet's and de Chirico's autobiographical writings, and in their expression of their relationship to the father figure in *Un Régicide* and *The Child's Brain*. The particular form taken by de Chirico's concept of memory, as an artistic element, is pertinent to a comprehension of the still-life vocabulary of such paintings as *The Sailors' Barracks* (1914; Florida, West Palm Beach, Norton Gallery and School of Art), *The Evil Genius of a King* (1914-15; New York, Museum of Modern Art), *Playthings of the Prince* (1915; New York, Museum of Modern Art) and *Still Life "Torino 1888"* (1914-15; Zürich, Collection Rolf and Margit Weinberg). Children's toys, such as a ball, a top, and a checker-board, among others, appear in these works as fantastic shapes, frequently resting on a slanting, vertical board which divides the canvas. The aesthetic and formal reasons for the use of this iconography are delineated in de Chirico's discussion of Schopenhauer's ideas about the link between memory and madness:

> That madness is a phenomenon inherent in every profound manifestation of art is self-evident.
>
> Schopenhauer defines as mad the man who has lost his memory. A definition full of acumen since that which forms the logic of our normal acts and of our normal life is indeed a continuous string of memories of relationships between objects and ourselves and vice versa.
>
> Let us take an example: I enter a room and see a man seated on a chair, hanging from the ceiling I see a cage with a canary in it, on a wall I notice pictures, and on the shelves, books. All this strikes me, but does not amaze me, since the chain of memories that links one thing to another explains the logic of what I see. But let us suppose that for a moment and for reasons that are inexplicable and independent of my will, the thread of this chain is broken, who knows how I would see the seated man, the cage, the pictures, the bookshelves; who knows what terror and perhaps what sweetness and consolation I would feel when contemplating that scene.
>
> But the scene would not have changed, it would be I who would see it from a different angle.[86]

The broken logic of childhood recollection is similar to the influence of memory on man's understanding of the visual perception of the relationship between objects.

In the third book of his philosophical work Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung (1818) Schopenhauer suggests that the ravings of madmen are nearly always related to their incorrect concept of the past; the continuity of their memory has been destroyed. "There are gaps in their recollection which they fill up with fiction" and, "Although the immediate present is correctly known, it becomes falsified through its fictitious connection with an imaginary past."[47] The mental organization of the semi-fictional past of Schopenhauer's madman, it should be noted here, resembles Robbe-Grillet's analysis of Bousquet's concept of memory, where the fragmentary recall of childhood incidents integrates with fanciful recollections to reconstruct an original and present version of an event. Schopenhauer believes that the madman is confused as to whether the past is real or invented:

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[86] Giorgio de Chirico, "On Metaphysical Art," Valori Plastici (April-May 1919); rpt. Metaphysical Art, ed. Massimo Carrà, pp. 88-89.

> . . . the madman has a true knowledge of what is actually present, and also of certain particulars of the past, but that he mistakes the connection, the relations, and therefore falls into error and talks nonsense. Now this is exactly the point at which he comes into contact with the man of genius; for he also leaves out of sight the knowledge of the connection of things, since he neglects that knowledge of relations which conforms to the principle of sufficient reason, in order to see in things . . . . their true nature, which manifests itself to perception . . . . The particular object of his contemplation, or the present which is perceived by him with extraordinary vividness, appear in so strong a light that the other links of the chain to which they belong are at once thrown into the shade, and this gives rise to phenomena which have long been recognised as resembling those of madness.[48]

Enlarging upon the idea that the ability to see objects in new and startling relationships is the consequence of madness as well as genius, Schopenhauer indicates the habitual links between things in the midst of everyday existence through a confused and fragmented recollection of the past and its consequence, which is a distorted perspective on the present. But the absence of predetermined connections also encourages the development of original perceptions that redefine the concept of the world. De Chirico's discussion of Schopenhauer's ideas brings these perceptions into the realm of the specific and the visual.

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[47] Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Idea, trans. R.B. Haldane and J. Kemp (1818; rpt. London: Kegan Paul, 1907), I, 249.

[48] Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Idea, I, 250-51.

The idea of memory explicated in de Chirico's statement, however, indicates a departure from Schopenhauer's suggestions. He says that in the madman the breakdown of memory's capacities means that present events and objects are constantly seen afresh; thus, for Schopenhauer, they are devoid of retrospective implications. Robbe-Grillet places more emphasis than Schopenhauer on the importance of the imaginative or fictional recreation of the past in the function of memory, taking into account its influence on the present. But both Robbe-Grillet's and Schopenhauer's notions about memory specifically refer to the relation of the individual to his past. De Chirico's manuscript, on the other hand, shows concern primarily with the relationship between objects, and only secondarily with the influence of memory on the conception of this relationship. This perspective seems less subjective, for where Schopenhauer and Robbe-Grillet assume that the individual will necessarily unite the fragments of memory with personal fictions, de Chirico apparently makes allowances for a more objective and universal reconstruction of remembered phenomena.

When Soby comments upon certain of de Chirico's still-life paintings, such as The Sailors' Barracks, that he "appears to have relied on a more or less total inspiration which he ecstatically transferred to canvas," in contrast to Picasso's choice of objects based on a sensitivity to a new plastic order,[''] this inspiration arises in part from revitalized and new perspectives on the objects of his past; the creative "self-hypnosis" Soby believes de Chirico was susceptible to arises in part from the destruction of the "continuous string of memories of relationships between objects and ourselves and vice versa." The radical nature of this disruption allows de Chirico to pile up the objects of his childhood in the foreground of the still-life group of paintings, at random, and to turn them into objects of the imagination as well as of the past. The strange object somewhat in the shape of a shuttlecock in The Evil Genius of a King, becomes a fanciful insect with balls added to indicate the head and feet, as well as little antennae. The green ball and the pin from The Song of Love reappear, and a flute and a top are among the other playthings; the geometrical designs on several of the objects are perhaps a reference to his engineer father. The apparently random placement of these objects on a plane which rears up towards the front of the picture, looming in the foreground against a background, on the bottom right, of an empty dark space,

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[''] James Thrall Soby, Giorgio de Chirico, p. 100.

and on the upper left of a structure with arcades, all cut through on the left by a startling red post, together make up a shocking, and inspired, composition. But the title of the painting, and the red post or phallic symbol which suddenly thrusts into the foreground, remind the viewer of the darker side of de Chirico's childhood, his Oedipal complex. Although the objects and the psychological difficulties of his youth do intrude on the work, the strength and originality of the visual composition vanquishes the "string of memories." De Chirico sees his past "from a different angle," fabulous and almost impersonal. In painting The Evil Genius of a King de Chirico has, metaphorically speaking, closed his eyes. He shuts out memory, and all senses but the most internal one:

> What I listen to is worthless: there is only what I see with my eyes open - and even better closed.[10]

A *tabula rasa* is created in an inner world where objects hover in the void.

Madness expressed as the loss of memory is intrinsic to the form of de Chirico's world of dream and imagination. In the critical exegeses of Robbe-Grillet's *Le Voyeur*, one finds a preoccupation with the psychoanalytical interpretation of Mathias as a character with a serious mental derangement. Critics find that his obsession with his childhood on the island he visits, as well as his apparent inability to clearly retain the details of the stories he narrates, such as the death of the young girl, are evidence that he is a victim either of schizophrenia, catatonia, or sexual obsession.[91] Erwan Rault believes that:

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[10] Giorgio de Chirico, "Manuscript from the Collection of the late Paul Eluard," *Giorgio de Chirico*, James Thrall Soby, p. 245.

> . . . l'auteur parvient - à l'aide de simple procédés d'écriture - à nous communiquer tout le malaise qui s'empare de Mathias alors qu'il est en proie à ses hallucinations: phrases incompréhensibles, arrêt inattendu de la progression naturelle de la phrase, accumulations gratuites de mots, contradictions, ou enfin, mélange de détails empruntés au vaste domain de son imagination, au souvenir de son enfance ou au souvenir immédiat.[92]

However, consideration of the characterization of Mathias as a victim of mental illness is not truly central to an understanding of the novel; the processes of writing that Rault believes are subsumed by the communication of Mathias' illness, are actually formal structures that control the thematic content. Like de Chirico, Robbe-Grillet wishes to destroy "the chain of memories" which participate in the linear temporality and the characterization of the realist novel; thus form takes precedence over content, and the gratuitous words, the contradictions, the confusion of detail, and the dislocation of past and present, structure the fonction créatrice of the novel.

Certain aspects of de Chirico's biography are important to an understanding of the aesthetic reconstruction of memory in his painting; in Robbe-Grillet's Le Voyeur such restructuring may be comprehended both through the information the author provides in his autobiographical fragments and the glimpses of Mathias' biography. In Le Voyeur, as in paintings such as The Evil Genius of a King, childhood is a pervasive influence, even in present activity; the mental landscape of the past is a terrain for the present and for the aesthetic organization of verbal and visual elements. The memories of the protagonist are clearly meant to play a part in the construction of the novel, for the very first page contains the lines:

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[91] Bruce Morrissette, Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1963), p. 103; Dennis Porter, "Sartre, Robbe-Grillet and the Psychotic Hero," Modern Fiction Studies, 16, No. 1, (1970), 13-25; Jean Ricardou, Problèmes du Nouveau roman (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), pp. 145-158.

[92] Erwan Rault, Théorie et expérience romanesque chez Robbe-Grillet: Le Voyeur (Paris: La Pensée Universelle, 1975), p. 72.

> On lui avait souvent raconté cette histoire. Lorsqu'il était tout enfant - vingt-cinq ou trente années auparavant . . . . (p. 9)

Immediately suggestive of the self-conscious nature of the fiction, the idea of a story recollected from childhood may indicate a boy's knowledge that the words of adults are not always true; this also leads to the surmise that the narrative action will in some way be intimately related to Mathias' past, and, as has since become apparent in Robbe-Grillet's autobiography, the author's youth. Mathias reflects on the viability of his attempt to sell watches on this island:

> Il avait fallu l'espoir de ce marché exceptionnel pour décider Mathias à entreprendre le voyage, qui n'était pas compris dans son plan théorique de prospection; deux fois trois heures de mer représentaient en effet une complication et une perte de temps trop importantes pour une île de dimensions si réduites - à peine deux mille habitants - où rien d'autre ne l'attirait, ni amitiés de jeunesse ni vieux souvenirs d'aucune sorte. Les maisons de l'île se ressemblaient tant,

> qu'il n'était même pas certain de reconnaître celle où il avait passé presque toute son enfance et qui, sauf erreur, était aussi sa maison natale. (p. 25)

While this passage asserts that Mathias does not return to his birthplace because of sentimental associations, at the same time an implication exists that memory inevitably influences, or permeates, his activity on the island.

The importance of childhood is indicated, at the beginning of the novel, on a verbal level through the hint of a story recounted to an infant; this is perhaps a reference as well to the stories Robbe-Grillet was told by his godmother, mentioned briefly in the second autobiographical fragment (p. 9). On a visual level, however, the novel opens with images reminiscent of de Chirico's painting. Before the memory of the childhood story arises, a series of paragraphs describes the end of Mathias' journey, and while it is the end of a crossing by boat, the imagery and the atmosphere is similar to that found in de Chirico's art. The title The Anxious Journey, which depicts arcades and a train, could be a suitable subtitle for the commencement of Robbe-Grillet's novel, for while the "jet de vapeur, épais et muet" (p. 9) comes from the smoke-stack of a boat, it might also be a description of the smoke that arises from the train looming ominously in de Chirico's painting. The attitude of the passengers is one of "anxiety," expressed in the look on their faces: "Une série de regards immobiles et parallèles, des regards tendus, presque anxieux" (p. 9) tries to cross a space, the space between the boat and the pier. A similar sense of spatial dilemma exists in The Anxious Journey where multiple vanishing points, and the hidden darkness and distances within the arcades, produce "a network of conflicting spatial tensions that undermine, psychologically speaking, any initial impression of quietude or stability."[93] There is even the atmosphere of silence which also pervades de Chirico's metaphysical paintings, and which he found so necessary to visual inspiration and revelation. Although the siren of the boat emits a long blast at the beginning of Le Voyeur, the noise is a "violence sans objet, qui demeura sans résultat," because "C'était comme si personne n'avait entendu" (p. 9).

The painting and the novel show an affinity in obsessive, recollected imagery. One particular figure mentioned from the beginning in Le Voyeur is a correlative of the childish outlook on life: "une petite fille de sept ou huit ans" (p. 10) who stares gravely at Mathias. Apparently she is travelling on the same boat to the island as Mathias:

> L'enfant regardait toujours dans sa direction. Pourtant il était difficile de préciser si c'était lui qu'elle observait, ou bien quelque chose au delà, ou même rien de défini; ses yeux paraissaient presque trop ouverts pour qu'ils pussent recueillir un élément isolé, à moins qu'il ne fût de dimensions très vastes. Elle devait seulement regarder la mer. (p. 11)

Mathias' difficulty in divining the direction of the child's regard may be a reminder that, consciously at least, he has forgotten how an infant looks at the world, but it also foreshadows his slips in perspective as the novel develops and ambiguous fragments of his childhood disorient his apprehension of the present. Another passage clearly indicates that the child may have false or imaginary attributes imposed upon her by the adult, in this instance particularly those of the imagination:

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[93] William Rubin, "De Chirico and Modernism," p. 59.

> . . . l'enfant conservait une attitude gracieuse. Son visage reflétait la douceur à la fois confiante et réfléchie dont l'imagination pare les bonnes élèves. Elle était dans la même posture depuis que Mathias avait remarqué sa présence; elle regardait toujours dans la même direction, là où se trouvait tout à l'heure la mer, mais où se dressait maintenant la paroi verticale de la jetée - toute proche. (pp. 22-23)

The phrase "la douceur . . . dont l'imagination pare les bonnes élèves" is a reminder that the childish characteristics described are imposed either by the suggestible mind of an observer or by the designs of the author's imaginative constructs. The little girl stands for the dualistic child - adult perspective reflected in the aesthetic form of the novel and, as we have seen, in de Chirico's paintings. But the stress on the fact that she stares at Mathias, or at the ocean, with wide open eyes also shows that Mathias' ambiguous memories of his youth are filtered, at least in part, through the visual sense.

The protagonist acknowledges the equivocal nature of memory when he says of his early home:

> On lui affirmait que rien n'avait changé depuis trente ans, dans le pays, mais il suffit souvent d'un appentis rajouté contre le pignon, ou du ravalement de la façade, pour rendre une

> construction méconnaissable. En supposant que tout, jusqu'au plus petit détail, fût resté tel qu'il l'avait laissé lors de son départ, il devait encore compter avec les imprécisions et inexactitudes de sa propre mémoire, dont l'expérience justement lui avait appris à se méfier. Plus que les modifications réelles du décor, ou même que les zones floues - si nombreuses pourtant qu'elles l'empêchaient de saisir la plupart des images - il lui fallait craindre les représentations précises, mais fausses, qui pouvaient avoir çà et là pris la place de la terre et des pierres de jadis. (pp. 25-26)

With this acknowledgement of the dubious nature of Mathias' memory, one may return to the interpretation of Robbe-Grillet's hero as a madman, for the mental illness the critics see in Mathias, is largely due to distortions of memory. In Le Voyeur, Mathias' flashbacks, and his transformations of present and future reality are close to the sadistic schizophrenia Bruce Morrissette discribes,[14] but they may be understood as well in relation to Schopenhauer's definition of madness. His idea that certain fictions are created by the mentally ill in order to fill in gaps in their past, and that their present is also fabricated by virtue of its connection to the invented past, not only suggests a realignment in our understanding of Mathias' insanity, but also indicates the relationships of the characterization to the fonction créatrice of the text: the text is structured and created by Mathias' point of view, which resembles that of a madman. The Freudian analysis of insanity, where the problems of childhood are found to be the root of deviancy in the adult, may also be relevant to the interaction of past and present in the novel. As Erwan Rault notes:

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[14] Bruce Morrissette, The Novels of Robbe-Grillet, pp. 108-09.

> La vulgarisation des grandes "lois" de la psychologie moderne par les mass-media permet au lecteur moyennement cultivé de reconnaître l'origine profonde du dérèglement mental de Mathias dans sa petite enfance, sans mère, sans camarades . . .[15]

But given that form is more signigicant than content in Le Voyeur, Schopenhauer's concept of madness seems more relevant than Freudian analysis, as it encompasses both the psychological and literary (or fictional) elements.

Although, from a certain perspective the nature of memory may be ambiguous in its confusion of fact and fiction there is, nonetheless, some indication in Le Voyeur that one form of recollection may be reliable: the visual aspect. The passage quoted above, when Mathias indicates an awareness that the memory of his youthful home could be deceptive, is immediately followed by a detailed and highly visual description of the physiognomy of the island houses -- the exterior arrangement of the doors and windows and the grouping of interior rooms -- perhaps indicating that such a visual impression is the only exacting memory which Mathias can rely on. In this sense the little girl of seven, with the staring eyes, is symbolic not only of the ambiguity of memory, but also of the more credible aspect of recollection: the visually assimilated places and events of the past. In the three passages where she is described at the beginning of the novel, there is considerable attention given to her sense of sight. She is depicted with eyes wide open in the first section, but Mathias is not certain of the focus of her vision, while the second passage stresses the optical sense as she stares out to sea. In the third example the contrast between her perspective and that of the passengers on the boat is dwelt upon:

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[15] Erwan Rault, Théorie et expérience, p. 54.

> Ses grands yeux démesurément ouverts (alors que tous les passagers plissaient plus ou moins les paupières, à cause du soleil qui commençait à percer), elle continuait de regarder droit devant elle, avec la même tranquillité qu'elle mettait tout à l'heure à le regarder dans les yeux. (p. 29)

A correlation between childhood and visual sensation is demonstrated here, as well as the uniqueness of optical perception, doubling as a connotation of the textual importance of "l'adjectif optique."

An examination of the passages most relevant to Mathias' childhood recollections in the novel may help delineate the significance of Robbe-Grillet's use of the visual to indicate the play of memory. The youthful event which impressed itself most strongly on Mathias relates to the incident when, left alone in his house in a dark room with a small window, he attempted to draw the exterior landscape of moor and cliff. The room itself may recall the one in Brest where Robbe-Grillet slept when he was a boy; "Des fenêtres de la chambre où je dormais, par-dessus les arbres, on apercevait toute la rade."[14] Robbe-Grillet also refers often to his personal attempts at drawing which he abandoned at an early age. The landscape is embellished by a seagull, another of Robbe-Grillet's frequently mentioned images of his youth, which is perched on one of the fence posts joined by barbed wire in order to enclose the potato patch planted on the moor. Characteristically, the sense of the boy drawing in his room is repeated throughout the novel, the variation in detail, such as change in lighting and weather conditions, correlating with the ambiguous nature of Mathias' memory. In the first depiction of the incident two weather conditions are mentioned. At first, "La pièce était très sombre. Dehors il pleuvait" (p. 18). On the next page the landscape is described again almost immediately, but first one is informed:

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[14] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Fragment autobiographique imaginaire," p. 5.

> Le temps était très calme, sans un souffle de vent. Il tombait une petite pluie, fine, continue, sans violence, qui, si elle bouchait l'horizon, ne suffisait pas à brouiller la vue pour de plus faibles distances. On aurait dit, au contraire, que dans cet air lavé les objets les plus proches bénéficiaient d'un supplément d'éclat - surtout lorsqu'ils étaient de couleur claire, comme la mouette. (p. 19)

Jumping to the end of the novel, Mathias the adult eventually finds himself sleeping in his old room, and at that point the two weather conditions seem to exist concurrently:

> Il fait grand jour. Mathias a bien dormi, d'une seule traite, sans remuer d'un pouce. Il se sent reposé, tranquille. Il tourne la tête vers la croisée.
>
> Dehors, il pleut. Il faisait du soleil, dehors, dans son rêve, dont il se souvient brusquement, l'espace d'une seconde, et qui disparaît aussitôt. (p. 232)

Past and present, memory and dream, come together to create "un monde nouveau" for Mathias, perhaps "cette fois retrouvé pour toujours."

In these passages the vagaries of memory, such as changes in time, light, and detail, are consistent with Robbe-Grillet's discussion of the topic in the essay on Joë Bousquet. But they also serve in Mathias' case as a rationale for the author's descriptive technique where he indicates that he is not attempting to reproduce the pre-existing reality of the protagonist's childhood. The description is seemingly not one of objective fact, but it indicates on one level the imaginative nature of Mathias' memory, and on another the creative function of description within the text. In "Temps et description dans le récit d'aujourd'hui" Robbe-Grillet indicates how the latter process functions as "un double mouvement de création et de gommage" (p. 127). The level of literary creation and "gommage," itself a technique of drawing adapted by Robbe-Grillet to describe a literary technique, is obvious in the transformation of an apparently realistic, factual description of Mathias' childhood room into the imaginative form lent to it by memory and dream.

The colourless manner in which this room and landscape are delineated resembles a drawing, perhaps the one by Mathias, rather than a painting, the contours of outlines and architecture making the strongest impression; a list of objects is given with a suggestion of their characteristic features and their relative placement in the landscape. The singular importance of outline rather than colour is particularly apparent in one description of the seagull:

> Il dessine. Il dessine une grosse mouette, blanche et grise, de l'espèce communément appelée goéland. L'oiseau est de profil, la tête dirigée vers la droite. On reconnaît la commissure sinueuse du bec et sa pointe recourbée, le détail des plumes sur la queue, ainsi que sur le bord de l'aile, et jusqu'à l'imbrication des écailles le long de la patte. (p. 22)

The visual language Robbe-Grillet employs here is one of line, entirely appropriate to the activity in question, and it should also be noted that he describes the creative process that goes into a visual artifact. The weather, a subject of description that seems to invite colour adjectives, is described instead in terms of its effect on the visual prospect, whether it is conducive or detrimental to a clear view of the landscape: the fine rain, while it obscures the horizon does not obscure objects nearby (p. 18). The relativity of visual perspective appears again in another description of the same landscape: "On n'aperçoit pas la mer, pourtant toute proche" (p. 21). The descriptive use of line culminates in the passage where the rain on the window-pane is detailed:

> Dehors, il pleut. Les quatre vitres sont pointillées de très fines gouttelettes, brillantes, disposées en traits obliques - mais parallèles - d'un à deux centimètres de long, hachurant toute la surface de la fenêtre suivant la direction d'une de ses diagonales. On entend - presque imperceptible - le bruit que font les grains de pluie en s'écrasant.
>
> Les rayures sont de plus en plus serrées. Bientôt la fusion des gouttelettes entre elles vient troubler la bonne ordonnance du dessin. L'averse commençait, lorsque Mathias a porté les yeux de ce côté-là. Maintenant de grosses gouttes se forment, un peu partout, et finissent par couler de haut en

> bas le long du verre.
> Des filets d'eau ruissellent sur toute l'image, dont le tracé se stabilise en une série de lignes sinueuses, grossièrement verticales, réparties avec régularité - distantes d'un centimètre et demi, environ. (pp. 232-33)

In this discription of the scene, towards the end of Le Voyeur, the adult Mathias observes the rain, and the lines of the gull, along with the lines of the landscape, culminate in the more sophisticated visual language of point and pattern; the perception of the child develops into that of the adult - more detailed, more able to withstand, or appropriate the Nichts behind the image.

The landscape of moor and cliff depicted on the second poster advertisement for a movie contributes another interesting comment on the significance of pictorial outline. When Mathias sees the poster he believes at first that it depicts a moor dotted with clumps of bushes:

> La nouvelle affiche représentait un paysage. Mathias, du moins, crut discerner dans ces lignes entrecroisées une sorte de lande parsemée d'arbustes en touffes, mais il y avait sûrement quelque chose d'autre, en surimpression: certains contours ou taches de couleur apparaissaient çà et là, qui ne pouvaient pas appartenir au premier dessin. Pourtant on n'osait pas dire, non plus, qu'ils en constituaient un second, car on n'apercevait aucune liaison entre eux, on ne leur devinait aucun sens; ils ne parvenaient en somme qu'à brouiller les ondulations de la lande, au point même de faire douter que ce fût là vraiment un paysage. (p. 167)

Robbe-Grillet seems to suggest here that a scene is perceived optically on two levels: firstly, the accustomed general comprehension of the landscape, as when Mathias sees the poster as a picture of moor and bushes, and secondly, the poster as self-conscious representation which makes it possible for the specific setting to blur into line and outline which are the elements of the visual composition. As reproduction or representation, the advertisement is filtered through two levels of vision: the perception in the mind of the viewer and its eventual transposition onto a piece of paper. In this aspect the poster is related to the sketch by the child Mathias. He is drawing, and outline is among the most essential elements of this process; he depicts his idea of the moors in front of him, impressing it upon the white notebook, and this indicates the same filtered level of vision as when he perceives the blurred lines and outlines in the poster. Thus Robbe-Grillet's repetitious description of Mathias' boyhood activity draws attention to his stated belief in the creative function of novelistic description. Mathias' activity in drawing the landscape is analogous to Robbe-Grillet's procedure in writing fiction in that both artist and novelist produce original works which are not complete reproductions of an existing world, but a result of processes in the creator's mind, such as those of dream, memory, and imagination, whose particulars are only coincidentally related to the external universe.

One may well ask for a clarification of Robbe-Grillet's motivation in emphasizing this particular role of visual description in the novel. In "Nature, humanisme, tragédie" he says:

> N'y aurait-il pas, tout d'abord, dans ce terme d'humain qu'on nous jette au visage, quelque

> supercherie? Si ce n'est pas un mot vide de sens, quel sens possède-t-il au juste?
>
> Il semble que ceux qui l'utilisent à tout propos, ceux qui en font l'unique critère de tout éloge comme de tout reproche, confondent - volontairement peut-être - la réflexion précise (et limitée) sur l'homme, sa situation dans le monde, les phénomènes de son existence, avec une certaine atmosphère anthropocentrique, vague mais baignant toutes choses, donnant à toute chose sa prétendue signification, c'est-à-dire l'investissant de l'intérieur par un réseau plus ou moins sournois de sentiments et de pensées. (p. 47)

In discussing, and deploring, the depths of humanism, Robbe-Grillet makes a further statement which is suggestive about his manner of depicting Mathias in the childhood setting. Not only do Mathias' eyes regard the landscape, there is also an eye which looks back on him, that of the seagull. Indeed, the seagull seems to be of great importance in the scene, for it is one of the objects that Mathias is greatly interested in sketching and which is most carefully delineated in the text. The reappearance of the bird in other passages in the text, such as those about Mathias' arrival by boat from the mainland, and his return to the supposed scene of the murder of Jacqueline confirms its significance. As the boat docks at the pier the gull comes into view:

> Une mouette grise, venant de l'arrière à une vitesse à peine supérieure, passa lentement à babord, devant la jetée, planant sans faire le plus imperceptible mouvement à la hauteur de la passerelle, la tête inclinée sur le côté pour épier d'un oeil vers le bas - un oeil rond, inexpressif, insensible. (p. 12)

Towards the end of the novel, as Mathias investigates the scene of the alleged crime two gulls appear:

> Encore un peu plus haut, deux mouettes décrivaient

> dans le ciel des boucles entrelacées - tantôt exécutant des cercles contrariés côte à côte, tantôt permutant entre elles leurs circuits en un huit parfait, sûr et lent, obtenu sans un battement d'ailes, par un simple changement de leur inclinaison. L'oeil rond, inexpressif, que la tête légèrement penchée sur le côté dirigeait vers le bas, à l'intérieur de la courbe, l'oeil immuable épiait, semblable aux yeux sans paupière des poissons, comme si une complète insensibilité l'eût tenu à l'abri de tout clignement. (p. 204)

In both of these passages the reader is made particularly aware of a sense of immobility: the fixed angle of the gulls' wings and their slow movement. The constant stare of the eye repeats the theme of the unblinking gull which the boy Mathias draws, and indicates that the human regard is returned by an external form - here the gull symbolizing the object, repository of man's subjectivity. The immobility of this lock, as with the stillness of the gulls' wings, suggests a stasis among external objects which would be directly opposed to the inevitable vicissitudes of Mathias' humanistic observation. Thus, the gulls'eyes represent an outlook which is apart from and devoid of anthropomorphic content. If the gull, the object or the outer eye looking in was to sketch a picture from its vantage point it would record its observations in the manner Robbe-Grillet describes in "Nature, humanisme, tragédie":

> Enregistrer la distance entre l'objet et moi, et les distances propres de l'objet (ses distances *extérieures*, c'est-à-dire ses mesures), et les distances des objets entre eux, et insister encore sur le fait que ce sont *seulement des distances* (et non pas des déchirements), cela revient à établir que les choses sont là et qu'elles ne sont rien d'autre que des choses, chacune limitée à soi. Le problème n'est plus de choisir entre un accord heureux et une solidarité malheureuse. Il y a

désormais refus de toute complicité. (p. 65)

The refusal of a humanistic complicity is also characteristic of de Chirico's painting as we have seen in the discussion of The Evil Genius of a King and in the artist's declaration that the aim of future painting should be to supress man as an expression of symbol, sensation, or thought. The manner of this assertion in certain of his other paintings has some iconographic similarity to the signs of Robbe-Grillet's anti-anthropomorphism in Le Voyeur. Among de Chirico's many important paintings of 1914, The Serenity of the Scholar (1914; New Jersey, Collection Sylvia and Joe Slifka) is perhaps the most enigmatic. On a canvas shaped as a trapezoid there appears in the foreground the back of the arm, shoulder and partial torso of a frock-coated figure whose hand is resting at waist level on a column, both figure and column being shaded in grey and white. A concrete structure, foreshortened in perspective leads to a horizon line and a background of smokestacks with the familiar puff of smoke, tiny flags and sky of midnight blue. On this structure, which is shaded in pink and marked geometrically, sits an enormous pair of glasses with thin frames made of wire. The lenses are a matte blue-green in colour reflecting nothing in the foreground, and their size is out of all proportion, according to the perspective of the painting. The glasses are suggestive of the vantage point of the gull's eye in Le Voyeur: the regard of the external object turned back on man. The impenetrability of their gaze has apparently turned the human figure to stone, as indicated by the grey shading, for man is thus deprived of a humanistic outlook on the world. Under the stare of these spectacles anthropomorphic considerations vanish. But an even closer analogy may be drawn between the glasses and an object in Le Voyeur, other than the gull's eyes.

In the transformation of objects under Mathias' scrutiny one finds that inanimate objects are several times depicted so as to take on the appearance of a pair of glasses. Towards the beginning of the novel, in observing the boat's approach to the pier Mathias decides to take as a point of reference a figure eight cut into the embankment, as we have already noted. The second time this figure is described it takes on a curious form:

> C'était un huit couché: deux cercles égaux, d'un peu moins de dix centimètres de diamètre, tangeants par le côté. Au centre du huit, on voyait une excroissance rougeâtre qui semblait être le pivot, rongé par la rouille, d'un ancien piton de fer. Les deux ronds, de part et d'autre, pouvaient avoir été creusés à la longue, dans la pierre, par un anneau tenu vertical contre la muraille, au moyen du piton, et ballant librement de droite et de gauche dans les remous de la marée basse. (p. 17)

In this description of the figure eight, two circles attached by a spot of red, it is easy to perceive the number as a pair of glasses. While there is mention in the text of a piece of cord structured as a figure eight, and of this number as the form shaped by the gulls in flight, the rings on the embankment most closely resemble spectacles. Thus, in Le Voyeur, as well as in de Chirico's The Serenity of the Scholar, a pair of glasses and the gull's eye represent objects which seem to become the implacable observers of man.

There is another motif running through Le Voyeur which is suggestive of the watchful, external eye: two round knots or circles painted on the door of the island house whose surface imitates "les veines et irrégularités du bois" (p. 36). Mathias' first sight of these markings causes him to think they resemble "deux gros yeux - ou plus exactement à une paire de lunettes" (p. 36). On another door of a house in the village he sees similar markings which "imitait . . . des lunettes, des yeux, des anneaux, ou les spires en forme de huit d'une ficelle roulée" (p. 66), thus causing the image of the glasses on the door to be integrated with that of rings on the embankment and the numerical shape of the cord. Steel-rimmed spectacles appear again on the table in Marek's house (p. 193), and the same form becomes apparent when Mathias uses his cigarette to burn holes in the newspaper clipping (p. 236). But the circles in the wood are important because they are described not only as glasses, but also directly as two watchful eyes, which draws attention not only to the affinity between Robbe-Grillet's motif and the glasses in de Chirico's painting The Serenity of the Scholar, but also to the correspondence with three of his other works: The Greetings of a Distant Friend (1916; New York, Private Collection), The Jewish Angel (1916; Mexico City, Collection Mr. and Mrs. Jacques Gelman), and Metaphysical Interior (1916; Greenwich, Connecticut, Private

Collection). One element common to these paintings, and of interest in relation to Le Voyeur, is an enormous eye drawn on a piece of drafting paper. Metaphysical Interior which depicts the eye in profile (unlike the other two paintings where the eye is seen from the front) is of particular relevance in relation to the image of the round circles on the door in Le Voyeur, for the eye is contiguous with a veined, artificial panel of wood in the foreground. Certain drafting instruments are indicated, as in many of de Chirico's works, and there are geometrical markings, as well as different planes which show de Chirico's break with traditional perspective and his construction of geometrical forms using the planes. But the marks on the piece of wood are in sharp contrast, as natural lines, with the lines of geometry and the exact manner of their artificial construction. In the midst of the confusion of man-made and natural lines, the profiled eye appears with a horizontal marker at its front edge, as if the exact limits of its perception were definable at this point. While critics have suggested that the eyes in de Chirico's work stand for the god-like, critical glare[17] of a paternal figure,[18] it seems more likely that, given the preceding analysis of the function of the spectacles in The Serenity of the Scholar, they are analogous to the external, objective eye, whose scrutiny is devoid of anthropomorphic content. The eyes or glasses painted on the wood of the door in Le Voyeur are thus in coincidence with the eye in de Chirico's Metaphysical Interior both in the iconographical presentation of these eyes in contiguity with the veins on simulated wood and in the idea of an observant, exterior regard, that is really man's subjectivity turned on itself. The subjectivity is so immutable that this exterior eye, as it appears in Mathias' drawing, "n'avait besoin d'effacer" (p. 20); as the object of our regard, the gaze it returns is a reflection of the self, and always zuhanden.

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[17] Robert Melville, "The Visitation," p. 8.

[18] William Rubin, "De Chirico and Modernism," p. 69.

The depiction of Mathias in a certain house, in a certain room, as he occupies himself with his drawing, is very specific:

> Derrière lui toute la maison était vide et noire. Sauf quand le soleil du matin les éclairait, les pièces du devant, du côté de la route, étaient encore plus obscures que les autres. Pourtant celle-ci, où il s'installait pour travailler, ne recevait de jour que par cette seule fenêtre, petite et carrée, profondément enfoncée dans l'épaisseur du mur; la tapisserie était très sombre, les meubles hauts, lourds, en bois foncé, serrés les uns contre les autres. Il y avait au moins trois immenses armoires, dont deux placées côte à côte, en face de la porte donnant sur le corridor. (p. 20)

Part of the new code of redundancy, which creates the circular, rather than linear, plot of Les Gommes, the childhood room is described repeatedly, and as we have seen, at the end of the novel Mathias returns to sleep in it as an adult. These passages, depicting the room from the dual child-adult perspective are related to another set of repeated descriptions, a different room apparently observed by the adult Mathias. This room is first mentioned as one which Mathias passes in the St. Jacques district, as he walks to the harbour to catch a boat to the island. Through a small window, by the light of an electric lamp, he sees a man with a raised arm, apparently about to strike someone on a bed. Like the room in which the boy draws a landscape, the scene becomes more detailed as it is repeated throughout Le Voyeur. Most importantly, however, towards the end of the novel, particulars of the room, in which the rape and murder of a young woman apparently take place, begin to coincide with details from Mathias' childhood room.

At this point the relative merits of outline and colour as they function in Robbe-Grillet'text come into play. For it is when the passages about the childhood room and the scene of the crime begin to show some unity of detail that colour becomes a part of the description. When Mathias looks into the window of an island house "l'unique fenêtre - sans rideau - était éclairée rougeâtre sur le bleu du crépuscule" (p. 225). Not only is colour used in the description, but red, among the strongest colours of the spectrum, is in this case the colour of the illuminated interior. In the delineation of Mathias' boyhood room, up to this point, there is no use of colour in the description: the room is "sombre" (p. 18), and the furniture is "lourds, en bois foncé" (p. 20). On the other hand, in the series of passages describing the apparent scene of a crime yellow (blonde), blue, and red are among the colours mentioned from the beginning. It is when the criminal events begin, somewhat enigmatically, to appear in the setting resembling the room of Mathias' memory that the colour neutrality of the early room is shattered with the powerful impression of red lighting (perhaps symbolically suggesting the violent context of blood).

According to Robbe-Grillet's statement that within the more objective sense of sight, colour is the most subjective quality, changing according to the merits of light, background, and spectator, the eventual coincidence of the interior of the room with the colourful description indicates its relation to a humanistic and subjective perspective. In the discussion of Jean-Paul Sartre's La Nausée in which Robbe-Grillet enlarges upon the influence of colour, he notes that the hero Roquentin is provoked to nausea by an ill-defined colour because he is afraid of objects not endowed with the humanistic qualities of colouring ("Nature, humanisme, tragédie," p. 66). Colour invites man's anthropomorphic intimacy with objects; it does not simply allow him to measure the distances.

The description of the room in which the murder takes place includes colours from the very first, starting with the blue rectangular object that is apparently a cigarette pack (p. 29). Later, the scene shifts from the three-dimensional setting of this room, to a two-dimensional depiction on a movie advertisement, but the girl's hair is again blonde, and the cover on the bed red (p. 45). Within the first two passages suggesting this murder takes place, the colours depicted are the three, theoretically primary ones used in mixing pigments and dyes: red, blue, and yellow. That it is these three colours, rather than the physical primaries (red, green, and blue), or the psychological primaries (blue, green, yellow, and red), which are used in the description should be remarked upon. The use Robbe-Grillet makes of colour is very specific; he does not employ the primary colours of refracted light which are measured physically, or the psychologically primary colours which correspond to constant hues, even with change in intensity and saturation. Instead, his description makes use of the basic colours which are theoretically, if not always practically, used in mixing paints.'' Given this level of the meaning of the colours used in the description of the second room in Le Voyeur, it seems that Robbe-Grillet stresses the conscious, technical use of colour in visual composition: the artist's knowledge of the craft which builds a finished painting, and by analogy the writer's own awareness of the skills which enable him to create a novel.

But these colours, the only ones repeatedly employed in the description, are of course important on other levels. The colour yellow, symbol of the blonde victim, and red, symbol of blood, could also refer to the stereotyped crime passionnel of both the popular detective movie (as indicated in the poster advertisement of the film) and detective story, while providing objects of "evidence" in the crime.

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'' Harold Osbourne, ed., "Colour," The Oxford Companion to Art (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 256-63.

The blue cigarette pack ostensibly stands for the "clue" which allows the investigator to discover the identity of the murderer. The reader can, therefore, turn again to the subjective nature of colour as an optical sense, for when in these passages it represents evidence of a crime it provokes hypotheses about the suggested murder which are not necessarily based on an external, objective truth. Rather, the objects belong to the Zuhandenheit and reflect an individual version of the truth. As Frederick Malins says of colour:

> Although we tend to refer to "colour" as if it exists as an entity in the outside world, since it is a sensation it only exists when there is someone present to experience the sensation.[100]

Mathias formulates the hypotheses which link verbal-visual colour signs in the novel, because he is the subject who experiences the sensation of colour throughout the narrative. His theories are expressed in such speculations as:

> Alors que tout le reste paraissait en ordre, le lit présentait au contraire un aspect de lutte, ou de ménage en cours. Les draperies d'un rouge sombre censées le recouvrir étaient défaites, bouleversées même, et pendaient d'un côté jusque sur le carrelage. (p. 68)

Upon viewing the movie advertisement he imagines:

> Vu la carrure d'Hercule de l'homme aux habits Renaissance, celui-ci n'aurait guère eu de peine à ramener vers soi le buste de la jeune femme; c'était donc lui qui préférait la maintenir ainsi, courbée en arrière - afin de mieux contempler son visage, peut-être. (p. 80)

Such words as "peut-être" and "vu la carrure" in this passage, and the multiple possibilities as to scenario offered in the former one, indicate the tentative nature of Mathias' observations. In "Une Voie pour le roman futur" Robbe-Grillet states:

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[100] Frederick Malins, Understanding Paintings, p. 96.

> Les pièces à conviction du drame policier nous donnent, paradoxalement, une assez juste image de cette situation. Les éléments recueillis par les inspecteurs - objet abandonné sur les lieux du crime, mouvement fixé sur une photographie, phrase entendue par un témoin - semblent surtout, d'abord, appeler une explication, n'exister qu'en fonction de leur rôle dans une affaire qui les dépasse. Voilà déjà que les théories commencent à s'échafauder: le juge d'instruction essaie d'établir un lien logique et nécessaire entre les choses; on croit que tout va se résoudre en un faisceau banal de causes et de conséquences, d'intentions et de hasards . . .
>
> Mais l'histoire se met à foisonner de façon inquiétante: les témoins se contredisent, l'accusé multiplie les alibis, de nouveaux éléments surgissent dont on n'avait pas tenu compte . . . Et toujours il faut en revenir aux indices enregistrés: la position exacte d'un meuble, la forme et la fréquence d'une empreinte, le mot inscrit dans un message. On a l'impression, de plus en plus, qu'il n'y a rien d'autre de vrai. Ils peuvent bien cacher un mystère, ou le trahir, ces éléments qui se jouent des systèmes n'ont qu'une qualité sérieuse, évidente, c'est d'être là. (p. 21)

In other words, in this theory the French author suggests that the investigator's or observer's thoughts about the facts of a crime may lead in a direction irreconciliable with the ultimate truth. The evidence of the crime, the blonde hair of the dead girl, the red bedcovers, and the blue cigarette pack, which provoke Mathias' hypotheses are colour signs, reinforcing their integration into the subjective perspective which the protagonist imposes upon them.

Colour is a sign of subjective viewpoint, but it is also part of another important structuring principle in Le Voyeur which has already been mentioned - imagination. As it is operative in the process of memory, imagination is a factor in the formulation of the description of Mathias' childhood room and, as part of the subjective frame of reference, it is also related to the other room (that in which the crime takes place) which seems to have only slight association with memory. As we have seen, Mathias' drawing, a creative act which takes place in the first room, is an inventive procedure. Although the actual description of the moor, the cliff, and the gull is couched in terms of line and contour to indicate its part in objective perception, the artistic process is a human one and, therefore, idiosyncratic and imaginative. Thus imagination is associated with the room rather than with the natural setting. In the case of the chamber in which the crime takes place, the use of colour in the description brings it within the imaginary realm for the spectator or observer, Mathias, who imposes his interpretation upon objects designated in this manner. Both the childhood room and the murder room are delineated so as to emphasize the contrast between their interior (the universe of the mind) and the exterior (the immutable world of objects). Bruce Morrissette notes that the narration in the third person of action exterior to the protagonist's thoughts, and his interior or mental activity, is characteristic of Robbe-Grillet's fiction.'°' But the importance of Mathias', intellectual activity is not to be found in psychological analysis. Instead, if one is to discuss the two rooms in *Le Voyeur* as signs of the mind's imaginative performance it is the spatial and visual features which invite examination, especially if Mathias' optical assimilation of the exterior landscape in his drawing is taken into consideration.

The composition of the childhood setting uses the landscape as a foil for the architectual structure of the house to indicate the existence of two distinct spatial areas. Spatial differentiation is emphasized again when towards the end of the novel the childhood room and the murder room begin to meld into one. Mathias is no longer the boy inside the chamber or the passing and distanced spectator of events preliminary to a crime; he is the *voyeur*, peering into the room, his head pressed against the windowpane watching the rituals which could be either sexual or murderous, or both:

> D'un pas sûr, il descendit vers la maison, dont l'unique fenêtre - sans rideau - était éclairée, rougeâtre sur le bleu du crépuscule.
>
> Il pencha la tête vers les carreaux. Ceux-ci permettaient, en dépit de la poussière collée ternissant leur surface, d'observer ce qui se passait à l'intérieur. Il y faisait plutôt sombre, surtout vers les angles. Seuls les objets tout proches de la source lumineuse étaient vraiment nets pour Mathias - posté suffisamment en retrait pour demeurer lui-même invisible. (p. 223)

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'°' Bruce Morrissette, *The Novels of Robbe-Grillet*, pp. 88-89.

Mathias now occupies a third space, outside of the two rooms, making him not only the voyeur, but also indicating a momentary distancing from his subjective and imaginative faculties which allows him to observe his own mental processes as would a complete stranger. The lighting within the room also suggests exactly how much of the interior, of his imagination, he is able to examine objectively. His probing is incomplete, for the corners of the room are in darkness, their contents merely hinted at by such things as the orange glow from the stove, while the objects on the table where the light stands are subject to a minute inventory. The workings of Mathias' imagination remain in part a mystery to him as denoted by the darknesses in the chamber. In other words, a Cartesian, objective examination is not the manner in which one may conclusively understand certain of the interior faculties. Throughout the passage, however, Mathias' apprehension of the setting is visual, enhancing the effect that the action is spatial rather than temporal, the eye moving from exterior to interior.

Mathias is finally forced to turn his gaze away from the interior:

> Aveuglé par la contemplation trop longue de la lumière, Mathias finit par détourner les yeux. Pour les reposer il dirigea son regard vers la fenêtre - quatre vitres égales, sans rideau ni brise-bise, donnant sur le noir de la nuit. Il ferma les paupières avec force à plusieurs reprises, en comprimant les globes oculaires, afin de chasser les cercles de feu demeurés sur la rétine. (pp. 226-27)

The visual movement which causes the protagonist to look away from the light and results in his examination of the window-pane, again emphasizes environment as spatial composition. The window establishes a dividing line between the objective and the subjective, the exterior and the interior, reality and imagination which also indicates an arrangement of spatial segregation through a median. Having disengaged his sight from the circles of fire Mathias suddenly finds himself on the other side of the median, inside the room which is no longer the setting for imaginary activity involving threats to a young woman, but instead merely his temporary place of lodging on the island:

> Il approcha la tête du carreau et tenta de regarder au travers; mais on ne voyait rien du tout: ni la mer, ni la lande, ni même le jardin. Il n'y avait pas trace de lune, ni d'étoiles. L'obscurité était complète. (p. 227)

Mathias is unable to sustain the position of exterior observer, of voyeur of his own mind, for any length of time. He returns to his habitual subjective perspective where for the moment at least the imagination is so strong that all exterior objects are unable to impress themselves upon his thoughts. The darkness of the interior corners of the mind become the obscurity of night in the exterior universe.

The abrupt movements in Mathias' perspective reveal not only the spatial element, but are also an indication of the employment of detail in visual apprehension. In the passage under discussion, Mathias' regard moves from an examination of the lamp, to the table and the objects upon it, to the stove, to the man and woman in the room, to a geometrically accurate perusal of the table and room, to the interaction between the two persons, and finally again to the lamp which is described in minute detail:

> La lampe est en cuivre jaune et verre incolore. Sur son socle carré s'élève une tige cylindrique à cannelures, supportant le réservoir - demi-sphère à convexité dirigée vers le bas. Ce réservoir est à moitié plein d'un liquide brunâtre, qui ne ressemble guère au pétrole du commerce. A sa partie supérieure se trouve une collerette en métal découpé, haute de deux doigts, où s'engage le verre - simple tube sans renflement, légèrement élargi à la base. C'est cette collerette ajourée, vivement éclairée de l'intérieur, que l'on distingue le mieux, dans toute la pièce. Elle est constituée par deux séries superposées de cercles égaux accolés entre eux - d'anneaux, plus exactement, puisqu'ils sont évidés - chaque anneau de la rangée supérieure se situant au-dessus d'un anneau de la rangée inférieure, auquel il est également soudé sur trois ou quatre millimètres.
>
> La flamme elle-même, née d'une mèche circulaire, apparaît de profil sous la forme d'un triangle largement échancré au sommet, qui présente ainsi deux pointes au lieu d'une seule. L'une de ces pointes est beaucoup plus haute que l'autre, et plus effilée; elles sont jointes entre elles par une courbe concave - deux branches ascendantes, dissymétriques, de part et d'autre d'une dépression arrondie. (p. 226)

It is at this point in the text that Mathias becomes temporarily blinded from staring too long at the light source, although his is not a true blindness. Instead, it is a matter of confusion resulting from a too detailed examination. We have seen that Robbe-Grillet is cognizant of the dangers of a visual isolation and extraction of detail, which can hover on the edge of absurdity ("Nature, humanisme, tragédie," pp. 65-66). Mathias is so overwhelmed by his close and lengthy scrutiny of the lamp that he loses his separate, objective regard and precipitates himself back into the interior, imaginative mode of thought.

The sudden and unexpected magnification of detail in objects is also characteristic of de Chirico's paintings, and part of their great plastic power; through a disproportionate amplification, particularly of background objects, his art projects a strong sense of disorientation. The most widely accepted theory is that this atmosphere in his pictures is produced by strange juxtapositions. William Rubin says of The Song of Love:

> . . . different contexts and levels of reality constantly mingle in dreams. What makes these minglings striking in de Chirico's art is not so much their presence per se as the quality of the poetry evoked by his particular confrontations -- a quality often intensified by exaggerated foreshortenings that bring the objects into hallucinatory proximity with the spectator. The juxtaposition in The Song of Love, of the head from an ancient Greek sculpture (Apollo Belvedere) with a surgeon's glove, a ball, and a distant locomotive, all set amid arcaded buildings, has the telling simplicity, force, and directness of Lautréamont's classic evocation. As with the latter's sewing machine, umbrella, and dissection table each of de Chirico's objects calls forth associations that are rationally quite unrelated to the associations of other objects.[182]

De Chirico criticism has traditionally emphasized the disorientation produced by juxtaposition, rather than the plastic aspect of the foreshortenings which create the feeling of estrangement, although, as we have seen, in a later essay on "De Chirico and Modernism" Rubin notes the use of shading rather than modelling which flattens objects and detracts from the condition of spatial illusionism in the Italian painter's works. However, it is de Chirico's foreshortening and detail, the bringing of objects into an unaccustomed, close focus which is analogous to the technique which Robbe-Grillet describes in his theory and employs in Le Voyeur. The visibility of detail in the depiction of the brick wall, in the back left of The Song of Love, is in sharp contrast to the train which, although it is presumably seen from the same distance, appears only as a dark contour. The contrasting use of detail and contour places the objects in a startling relationship to their environment, and creates the effect of the permutations of reality as seen within a dream. Mathias' overly eager assimilation of detail, in Le Voyeur, as he looks in the room lit by a red light forces him to return to his imaginative apprehension of the setting, and the subjectivity which overwhelms the Cartesian sense of objectivity.

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[182] William Rubin, Dada and Surrealist Art, pp. 131-32.

Robbe-Grillet utilizes the memory and the fantasy of his character to indicate the space of the imagination as Mathias' mind roams through various past and present, real and imagined, rooms to indicate imaginative space. De Chirico is also preoccupied with the expression of the mental interior and exterior in certain of his visual devices, a motif also apparent in Hebdomeros, where he describes a room strikingly similar to Mathias' boyhood one:

> Tout en écoutant ces discours d'une oreille distraite, Hebdomeros poursuivait un souvenir qu'il ne réussissait pas à préciser dans sa mémoire. Il se rappelait vaguement une chambre n'ayant pas de fenêtre du côté de la mer; par l'unique ouverture, exposée au nord, ce qui conférait à la pièce un éclairage d'atelier, on apercevait au loin une partie de cette longue montagne dont l'autre

> descendait vers le golfe et, plus près, des arbres, surtout des pins. Les vents violents qui souvent venaient de la mer les avaient pliés en des poses esthétisantes de danseuses excentriques; cela contrastait en ce moment d'une façon assez curieuse avec le calme absolu qui régnait dans l'atmosphère. Dans la clarté de cette belle journée d'octobre, les malheureux pins semblaient condamnés au purgatoire d'une éternelle tempête et derrière eux, au nord (côté diamétralement opposé à la mer), l'horizon brillait d'une pureté helvétique. (p. 21)

As with the room in Le Voyeur, Hebdomeros' room is a small one with a single window, although looking out away from the ocean. Like Mathias, Hebdomeros produces the room from a corner of his memory and the recollection is provided illogically by the conversation of others around him and by his observation of them. The same dislocation in train of thought is apparent when Mathias' mind wanders from speculations about the ring on the embankment to remembrances of a day in his childhood (pp. 17-18). The peculiar significance of rooms to de Chirico (or Hebdomeros) is also evident in the following passage from the novel:

> Hebdomeros . . . aurait voulu lui dire qu'il avait horreur des panoramas et qu'il n'aimait que les chambres, les bonnes chambres ou l'on s'enferme, rideaux baissés et portes close et surtout les coins des chambres et les plafonds bas . . . . (p. 53)

As with the room into which Mathias peers as the voyeur, darkened corners are sources of mystery and fascination to Hebdomeros. The potentialities of imagination inherent in a darkened interior space appealed to de Chirico from early childhood as his Memoirs indicate:

> My most distant memory is of a big room with a high ceiling. In the evenings it was dark and gloomy in this room; the paraffin lamps were lit and the shades put in place . . . From that extremely remote

> memory of my infancy, from that dark and gloomy room which I see again as one sees a dream within the mind . . .[103]

In the latter passages, even more so than in Robbe-Grillet's description of chambers in Le Voyeur, there is a sense of space as enclosure, of an interior around which walls are constructed to keep out unwanted intrusions from another universe, of curtains drawn so that any light or mental illumination must of necessity be from an artificial, and imaginative, human source.

The concept behind de Chirico's affinity for enclosed spaces, artificially illuminated, is exemplified visually by his depiction of the mannequin heads in The Two Sisters (1915; Düsseldorf, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen). The head in the foreground bears some resemblance to the helmet from a suite of armour, but it has a strange, fringed wig perched on top and two enormous semi-rectangular black holes instead of eyes. In the background on egg-shaped head set on a graceful female neck and a pair of shoulders is painted in white, the source of illumination indicated by the green tone on the right side of the object. A set of lines meets in the centre of the head, at eye level, to form a circle or what might be considered an eye. Laura Rosenstock notes that de Chirico viewed the openings or holes in his mannequins as windows onto reality,[104] and this suggests the idea that the interior of the mannequins head is analogous to the dark rooms, with curtains drawn, which so appealed to de Chirico, as well as to the semi-darkness of the rooms in Le Voyeur. In the case of the head with the fringed wig the interior room is indeed darkened, but it is a darkness which is a mental preparation for meditation undisturbed by outside influences. This is the first step towards the intellectual interiority which finds completion in the smooth and pristine exterior of the other head; on this perfect void there remain no openings through which the exterior universe might gain entrance. The lines around the head enclose it, rather than opening it outward. As we have seen, this method of indicating mental interiority is prefigured by the closed eyes of the man in The Child's Brain. The imagination, undisturbed by the outer world, becomes in this interior space all-powerful.

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[103] Giorgio de Chirico, Memoires, p. 63.

[104] Laura Rosenstock, "De Chirico's Influence on the Surrealists," De Chirico, ed. William Rubin, pp. 116-17.

In Le Voyeur the eyes of the protagonist, as well as the different rooms, are used to indicate mental interiority or subjectivity. One of the passages where Mathias muses upon the scene in the room of the suggested crime begins with the words "il ferma les yeux" (p. 126) and, after a brief recapitulation of the spectacle in the Saint Jacques district, ends with the sound of waves when "il ouvrait les paupières" (p. 127), returning to the present setting on the island. The interior, mental nature of this exercise again stresses the imaginative context of the room in which the crime is apparently committed, and the necessity of excluding the outer world in order to create an inner space, which may be compared to that of de Chirico's eggheaded mannequin. The importance of this inner area is stressed in one of the final passages of the novel where Mathias finds himself lodged in what he at last realizes to be his boyhood room. The section begins with the words "ainsi, il était de nouveau seul dans cette chambre où il avait passé toute son enfance" (p. 229). The sentence is repeated two paragraphs later with alterations: "il était de nouveau seul dans cette chambre où il avait passé toute sa vie regardant aux vitres sans rideau de la petite fenêtre carrée, profondément enfoncée dans le mur" (p. 230). The interior space or imagination is equated in the former phrase with memories of childhood, in the latter sentence with Mathias' boyhood and adult existence, adding up to the totality of his life.

Upon first impression the latter sentence in particular conveys a negative impression of an imaginative vision which is narrow or imprisoning, as do the black, empty spaces in the head of de Chirico's mannequin with the wig. But in this description of the room in Le Voyeur there is an interior space within the interior space: the cupboard the young Mathias had used to store his string collection. Mathias wonders if it is still locked, as it used to be, but upon examination finds that although the key is not in the keyhole:

> L'armoire n'était pas fermée à clef. Il l'ouvre en grand. Elle est absolument vide. Sur toute la surface de ses vastes étagères, régulièrement espacées, il ne traine pas le moindre porte-manteau, ni la moindre cordelette. (p. 235)

The pigeonholes in the desk and the drawers in the commode are also unlocked and just as empty. By placing the empty pieces of furniture in the interior of the room which may be seen as a correlative of Mathias' imagination, Robbe-Grillet creates a blank space, another tabula rasa, which may be compared with the pristine space enclosed by the eggshaped head of the mannequin. Once this blank space, as indicated by the head, and the empty closet in Mathias' room, is formulated, the imagination may choose between two directions: towards an assimilation of objects under the presumptions of an anthropomorphic perspective and Cartesian dualism, or a transition that acknowledges that objects are zuhanden and part of the life man creates for himself through his imagination. De Chirico defines the appearance of objects in his essay on metaphysical art:

> Every object has two appearances: one, the current one, which we nearly always see and which is seen by people in general, the other a spectral or metaphysical appearance beheld only by some rare individuals in moments of clairvoyance and metaphysical abstraction, as in the case of certain bodies concealed by substances impenetrable by sunlight yet discernible, for instance, by X-ray or other powerful artificial means.[103]

The spectral or metaphysical appearance of the object could refer to the aspect of the thing which is zuhanden, devoid of anthropomorphic presuppositions, which is so seldom glimpsed by man accustomed to a humanistic perspective; normal observation encases objects in this shield. But in their analysis of exterior and interior space, Robbe-Grillet and de Chirico redefine the relationship of man to object, to elucidate a free area of the imagination.

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[103] Giorgio de Chirico, "Metaphysical Art," Valori Plastici (April-May 1919), p. 16; rpt. James Thrall Soby, Giorgio de Chirico, p. 67.

The affinity between de Chirico's paintings, and the three novels by Robbe-Grillet, demonstrates that in the relations between the works of the *nouveau romancier*, the surrealists, and their precursors, techniques of verism rather than automatism delineate the connections. The verist or *imagier* painters of surrealism were inheritors of a style of modernism the great originality of which derives directly from de Chirico, although the exceptional nature of his pictorial composition has not been fully appreciated until recently, as demonstrated by such essays as William Rubin's "De Chirico and Modernism." De Chirico, a member of the avant-garde which broke the code of visual composition at the beginning of the twentieth century, uses real objects rather than abstractions, and appeals to the code breaking impetus in Robbe-Grillet's fiction because of the particular style of his visual manipulation. Robbe-Grillet has no interest in, and was not influenced by, abstract art;[186] if painting is a signpost in his literary adventures, de Chirico is a logical guide both iconographically and formally.

A historical link exists between de Chirico and Robbe-Grillet, who knew and admired the work of the artist's metaphysical period, as well as a typological affinity between their thematic and formal preoccupations: childhood, and particularly the role of the father, a nonanthropomorphic stance, the approach to the problem of the void, the use of elements of visual composition, and the structure of memory and dream. One may also claim they belong to an analogous attempt, at first in art and much later in fictional narrative, to break away from certain aesthetic conventions and to replace them with new codes of expression, and a new relationship with reality affecting the role of the observer or reader. To relate one creator to the other, and to perceive the writer's experiments in the context of de Chirico's artistic *sensibilité*, and to the philosophy of Heidegger, who provides a conceptual frame and justification for Robbe-Grillet's intuitions, contributes to a clearer definition of the techniques employed, and the goals pursued, by the French author.

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[186] Personal interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet, 11 Oct. 1983.

# VI. ROBBE-GRILLET AND POP ART: TECHNIQUE AND ICONOGRAPHY IN "DANS LES COULOIRS DU MÉTROPOLITAIN," LA MAISON DE RENDEZ-VOUS, AND PROJET POUR UNE RÉVOLUTION À NEW YORK

In Un Régicide, Les Gommes, and Le Voyeur Robbe-Grillet's break with the traditional narrative code has a great affinity with the original "poetics" of the visual code in the paintings de Chirico produced between 1910 and 1917, particularly as they both make an exceptional use of the unconscious and the imaginative context of memory and dream to arrive at a new aesthetic form, and not only a new content. In the examination of Robbe-Grillet's visual techniques we have seen that the discontinuation of his fictional publication between 1959 and 1965, that is between Dans le labyrinthe and La Maison de rendez-vous, marks a radical change in his approach to the form of the novel, with a movement away from the interaction between deep and surface structures. When the code is broken in the earlier novels with the purpose of establishing new redundancies, it draws upon some type of plot, no matter how unorthodox the presentation: the investigation of a murder in Les Gommes, or the actions of a possible killer in Le Voyeur, for example. Repeated and fragmented events and images find a source in this content, as well as in the novel form. In La Maison de rendez-vous and Projet pour une révolution à New York Robbe-Grillet turns from plot to fictional generators as the creative basis of the text; while the method of textual fonction créatrice is by no means discarded, generation means the entry into the text of images, objects, or words which engender, or give rise to, the fiction. The entry of external factors into this process means that a primary, referential level is inevitable, but the generative action quickly re-establishes the independence of the text thereby avoiding thematization. As Morrissette observes in his article on post-modern generative fiction:

> Themes, to use an analogy developed by Robbe-Grillet in the preface to _Glissements progressifs du plaisir_, provide the "reservoir" from which the author takes his subjects and motifs; they are like de Saussure's _langue_, from which the novelist or filmmaker extracts the elements used to create his own, individual creative style or _parole_. Fictional structures are not therefore thematic in any ideological sense (as, for example, the "thematic" structure of ambiguous, incoherent, open-ended scenes in the films of the Italian neo-realists designed to embody and reflect a view of life itself as ambiguous and incoherent) but relate to, while going far beyond, such traditional structuring procedures as patterns of chronology, modes of viewpoint, intercalated narration, _liaisons de scène_, analogues and _mises en abyme_, fictional patterns borrowed from epic or myth, and so forth.[1]

Morrissette acknowledges that generative theory may be a recuperation of familiar techniques, but that it is useful in approaching a fiction in which these principles function intentionally rather than unconsciously.[2]

While linguistic generators are common among some of the other French _nouveaux romanciers_, such as Jean Ricardou, Robbe-Grillet insists that he does not use words in this fashion, also preferring to avoid "les permutations de lettres ou combinaisons s'attachant à la forme du mot indépendamment de son sens."[3] In lieu of words or letters he draws on elements of popular culture:

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[1] Bruce Morrissette, "Post-Modern Generative Fiction: Novel and Film," _Critical Inquiry_, 2, No. 2 (Winter 1975), 258-59.

[2] Bruce Morrissette, "Post-Modern Generative Fiction," p. 260.

> . . . mes thèmes générateurs sont choisis de plus en plus - et ça me paraît découler de ce qui précède - dans l'imagerie populaire contemporaine ("populaire" au sens large, car la circulation de ces images entre les classes est totale, dans nos sociétés dites avancées): couvertures illustrées des romans qu'on vend dans les gares, affiches géantes, revues pornographiques des sex-shops, publicités vernies des magazines de mode, figures peintes à plat des bandes dessinées, autrement dit tout ce qui a remplacé ma prétendue profondeur, ce moi qui a été chassé de mon for intérieur et se trouve aujourd'hui placardé en pleine lumière dans les vitrines ou sur les murs mêmes de la cité.[4]

"L'imagerie populaire contemporaine" Robbe-Grillet mentions here could be a provisional catalogue of the imagery in American pop art. In an encyclopedia of modern art, the iconography of this type of art is delineated in the following manner:

> The subject-matter of Pop concentrates on commercial art (advertisements, wrappers, packages, etc), the styles of the cinema and television (particularly the mythology surrounding the big stars such as Monroe and Presley), the art of the comic strip, newspaper photographs, pin-up magazines, signs and badges, stencilled lettering, machinery and mechanical drawing, and trivial everyday objects. These things are the familiar common property of all, not merely accessible to those with a knowledge of art history. In this sense Pop is a genuinely popular art, although the sophistication of some of its processes may not be appreciated by a

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[3] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Sur le choix des générateurs," Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui, II, 161.

[4] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Sur le choix des générateurs," p. 161.

minority.[5]

As mentioned in the first chapter, Robbe-Grillet's feeling of affinity with American pop artists such as Roy Lichtenstein and James Rosenquist extends beyond the use of similar images, to an empathy with their aesthetic system: one which recycles the raw material of the discourse of this society into a new code. The relationship of Robbe-Grillet's work to de Chirico's metaphysical painting, and via him to the verist surrealist painters, also exists on the level of a system, albeit of a different type. Nicolas Callas even establishes a connection between the derivation of pop icons, de Chirico's art, and the world of dream:

> Let us enjoy images as images, as we enjoy games for the sake of playing. Addiction to images is a dream derivative. To be communicated in visual terms, sights seen, whether in sleep or in the world around us, must be given form in a selected medium. Since a reproduction is not meant to be confused with its original, the artist in his painting will include only those aspects of the beheld which he either wishes to or is able to reproduce. Pictures of reality or of dreams that have crucial cultural impact are icons . . . . The Industrial Revolution outspeeded clocks but the Futurist's view of the phenomenon remained trivial, and was exploded by de Chirico in the name of anxiety. Moreover, with de Chirico's biscuits, matchboxes, and fish mould, anti-art elements were introduced into modern art [The Amusements of a Young Girl [1916; New York, Museum of Modern Art]. From his Gare Montparnasse [1914; New York, Museum of Modern Art] back to Palladio, through a metaphysical reality, a world of false dreams is unravelled.[6]

Callas sees de Chirico as the originator of the anti-art element, that is the everday object, as a phenomenon in painting, which was later exploited with such unparalleled success by the pop artists.

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[5] Roger Brunyate, ed., "Pop Art," Follett-Larousse Concise Encyclopedia of Modern Art, p. 195.

[6] Nicolas Callas, "Pop Icons," Pop Art, ed. Lucy R. Lippard, Praeger World of Art Series (New York: Praeger, 1966), pp. 163-64, 166.

In his article entitled "Pop Art and Surrealism" David Irwin traces the similarity in the two movements through their metamorphosis of the material of popular culture into a work of art, generally and specifically. On a specific basis he finds stylistic relationships between Magritte and Rosenquist, and de Chirico and D'Arcangelo.[7] Allan D'Arcangelo's paintings have made him into the pop artist of American highways; Flint Next (1963; Detroit, Collection Mrs. Hoke Levin) and Road Series (1965; New York, Fiscbach Gallery) depict what Lucy Lippard considers "an ultra-Pop subject matter": "the American highway speeding vertiginously into the future."[8] Irwin notes that Callas finds in this roadway a use of perspective deriving from de Chirico:

> A fellow artist, Nicolas Calas, has recently written that 'before Allan D'Arcangelo there was Chirico, to whom we should be everlastingly grateful for having made the landscape look as artificial as an African mask. Reality is not enough! Playing with distance Chirico evoked a Palladian past. But he was not granted the prescience to foresee that some half-century later his biscuits would acquire a Pop taste.' And he continues, a little later, that 'unlike Chirico who shifts the position of the vanishing point to create the sense of loss-of-position between the now and the historical past, D'Arcangelo makes of the vanishing point the polar star of the speeding driver.' The resulting

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[7] David Irwin, "Pop Art and Surrealism," Studio International, 171 (May 1966), 187-91.

[8] Lucy Lippard, "New York Pop," Pop Art, ed. Lucy Lippard, p. 130.

> images in D'Arcangelo's paintings are of disconcertingly deserted roads seemingly going into infinity, punctuated only by viaducts and route signs. They have the dead, mysterious quiet of Chirico's metaphysical paintings.[9]

Pop artists find in de Chirico a starting point for the most modern use of the iconography of dream and image, and the technique of perspective. De Chirico's art draws its power from the previously rarely processed form and materials of the dream combined with his classical, technical skills as an artist; the impact of pop art "was owed to the combination of unprocessed material from everyday life with traditional fine-art procedures (paint on canvas, adjustments of scale, adroit reemphasis and the use of isolated details in the interest of irony or pathos)."[10]

In his dictionary of surrealism José Pierre makes a few, somewhat random comparisons between pop art and surrealism. Under the entry on the surrealist object he questions whether the surrealists fully exploited the object, although he refers to the abstract group of painters rather than the imagiers, when he brings up the topic:

> . . . we are left with the impression that it was considered as a diversion by the surrealist painters instead of being--as Pop Art and the New Realism were to understand it--a veritable engine of war against traditional painting and sculpture; we should add, however, that these last mentioned movements emptied the surrealist object of most of its poetic content.[11]

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[9] David Irwin, "Pop Art and Surrealism," p. 91.

[10] John Russell, The Meanings of Modern Art, The Museum of Modern Art (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 345.

[11] José Pierre, "Object (surrealist)," An Illustrated Dictionary of Surrealism, p. 125.

Unfortunately such commentary ignores the contribution of Magritte and Delvaux to the surrealist investigation of the object, while criticizing the abstract, automatist painters such as Tanguy and Miro for not doing what they did not set out to do in the first place. The entry under pop art takes it back to its origins in Dada, but then proceeds to obscure the issue by referring to the objects of Duchamp and Magritte as the real point of departure:

> In the U.S.A. the reaction against 'abstract surrealism' happened around 1955 under the sign of Dada with Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. But Pop art took its real point of departure in the 'readymades' of Duchamp and the work of Magritte, since both seemed to authorize the artist to take the most commonplace objects as models of treatment (Lichtenstein, Warhol). Wesselmann, however, reveals a spectacularly infantile eroticism, Segal populates the American cities with plaster figures, Jim Dine piles up joke-quotations. Of all the Pop artists, the closest to surrealism are often rich in poetic allusions, and Claes Oldenburg, whose huge and aberrant objects are like extending Salvador Dali and Dominguez ideas to the public square.[12]

The points of comparison Pierre chooses to mention are frequently arbitrary and most certainly indicate only a superficial grasp of the relationships, an analysis which develops from generalizations rather than from a close scrutiny of the two art movements in question.

Nicolas Calas' inquiry into Roy Lichtenstein's and Jasper Johns' art as a development of surrealist tendencies is more to the point, and more valuable, because of the specific examples employed in the comparison and a demonstration of the knowledge of procedures of visual production so important to understanding pop art. Callas states that, "Surrealism sought to overcome the contradiction between desire and reality on the plane of a super-reality. Pop Art deals with a reality that is apt to be the printed reproduction of the image."[13] He notes, however, that the assimilation of the reproduction as the actual model is blocked in Lichtenstein's case by the use of ben day dots, a commercial printing technique, which he applies in the background of the painting Temple of Apollo (1964; Pasadena, Collection Mr. and Mrs. R.A Rowan); "the reproduction and the printing process meet on an anti-image level." The transition is made from surrealist super-reality to the reproduction of everyday reality in such a way that the viewer's identification with both the painted image and preconceived notions of external reality disintegrate upon close scrutiny of the painting. The loss of certainty results in a questioning of the representation of reality and the "inner" representation of reality through a technique similar to Robbe-Grillet's use of the painting of a ruined Greek temple in the window display in Les Gommes. According to Calas the surrealists reproduced the dream photographically; the pop artists reproduce reproductions.

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[12] José Pierre, "Pop Art," An Illustrated Dictionary of Surrealism, pp. 138, 140.

While Robbe-Grillet's novels are, even the earliest ones, visual texts in the sense of technique, perhaps the very flatness of the images, which is characteristic of the visual imagery in La Maison and Projet as we have seen it in the second chapter, is due to a visual technique similar to that employed by Lichtenstein in his pop art. Since Robbe-Grillet no longer relies on plot in these novels, but instead on generation, images become independent of the narrative flow in these works, a freedom more characteristic of the aesthetics of New York pop art, than of any developments in the contemporary French novel, closely guarded by theoretical watchdogs such as Jean Ricardou who, figuratively speaking, would prefer to keep French writers of fiction in the straightjacket of his literary theory. Robbe-Grillet's attempt to avoid such constrictions is obvious in his response to Françoise van Rossum-Guyon's demand that he give a "precise" example of how a pornographic novel, or an advertisement, serves as a generator in Projet:

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[13] Nicolas Calas, "Pop Icons," p. 169.

> Ce n'est guère possible: cela se développe rarement d'une façon théorique. Je ne choisis pas mes générateurs au départ en une sorte de catalogue clos et complet. Ce que le générateur a de particulier, c'est qu'il engendre: il s'engendre lui-même et engendre en même temps d'autres générateurs. Il y a sans cesse des constellations mobiles qui se forment et qui se déforment. Il ne faut pas ramener notre travail à des opérations mécaniques. Il y a au contraire une liberté de mouvement constante, grâce justement à la non-naturalité des générateurs choisis.[14]

The sense of freedom which owes its existence "à la non-naturalité des générateurs" has an affinity with the formalism which Lucy Lippard stresses as an important influence on New York pop art, in that a concern with form, even in the depiction of images of contemporary culture, submerges their sociological implications, and thus converges with Robbe-Grillet's non-anthropomorphic stance.

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[14] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Sur le choix des générateurs," p. 167.

The French nouveau réalisme, a parallel stream to American pop art, in which Robbe-Grillet does express some interest,[15] is more frequently concerned with direct, ideological commentary. Pierre Restany, the French art critic, designated himself as spokesman for the nouveaux réalistes on 16 April 1960 in his first manifesto entitled "Nouveau réalisme," published for an exhibit at the Galleria Apollinaire in Milan.[16] But the French artists who grouped themselves with Restany, such as César, Daniel Spoerri, Jean Tinguely, Niki de Saint-Phalle, Christo, and Gérard Deschamps, among others, produced works closer in nature to assemblage than to American pop art. "For most of the artists associated with Restany, the transposition of a single commercial image or object on to canvas without apparent alteration would be unthinkable; it would be too simple, too lacking in intellectual challenge."[17] The French artists are engagé and literary in their approach to the two signs of the modern age, the factory and the city, and to other aspects of modern culture. For instance, Christo's Packaged Magazine-Life (1962; Rome, Galleria La Salita) is exemplary of his many mysterious, packaged shapes, where aesthetic interest is created by the addition of paper and string and the enigmatic object they enclose. Along with such works, which insist on the transcendent implications of the object, Pierre Restany's insistence on elements of this art as "part of the world of social interchange, of direct communication between human beings,"[18] makes the nouveau réalisme a forum for sociological exchange, unlike the direct concern with artistic fonction créatrice found in American pop art, where the "artists work from the artifacts of culture and retain the compact identity of art no matter how extensively they quote from the environment."[19]

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[15] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Robbe-Grillet à la question," pp. 426-27.

[16] Lucy Lippard, "Europe and Canada," Pop Art, ed. Lucy Lippard, p. 174.

[17] Lucy Lippard, "Europe and Canada," p. 174.

Lucy Lippard has noted in a free-wheeling manner that "Hard-core Pop Art is essentially a product of America's long-finned, big-breasted, one-born-every-minute society, its advantages of being more involved with the future than with the past"; she regards the mature pop idiom as being special to America.[20] But commercial subject matter apart, it is the aesthetic roots, the mastery of technical skills handled with great precision, where American pop art finds its general affinity with certain examples of Robbe-Grillet's nouveau roman:

What is characteristic and entirely American about

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[18] Pierre Restany, "Paris Letter: The New Realism," Art in America, No. 1 (1963), p. 104.

[19] Lawrence Alloway, American Pop Art, Whitney Museum of American Art (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 2.

[20] Lucy Lippard, "Introduction," Pop Art, ed. Lucy Lippard, p. 11.

> Pop art is the high level of technical performance. Johns' mastery of paint handling, Rauschenberg's improvisatory skill, Lichtenstein's locked compositions, Warhol's impact as an image maker, reach the point that they do because of the high level of information about art in New York. In the background are the abstract expressionists, setting an aesthetic standard of forceful presence and impeccable unity. In addition, the Pop artists' peers were largely abstract painters, like Frank Stella and Ellsworth Kelly, and Pop artists shared with them a sense of how paintings should cohere holistically. This has sometimes been taken to mean that the Pop artists were essentially abstract painters, that the iconography was not essential. In fact the link is generational, and it seems to be a fact that preplanning and tidy execution, as a result of Johns' and Stella's influence, were taken up as ways to refute the free-work methods of de Kooning and Pollock. Pop art in the United States, more than elsewhere in the world, is a learned and physically exacting style, partly because it had to measure up to and survive the competition of peer group rivals in other styles. In retrospect, it is extraordinary that recognition of the complex formality and sensuality of Pop art should have been so long delayed by the supposed banality of the subject. High style and low subjects, as it is now easier to see, are combined in American Pop art, and neither term can be removed without damage to the artists' achievements. The words in Johns do have a meaning, though not a simple one; the images in Rauschenberg have iconographical connections, though not causal ones.[21]

Robbe-Grillet's manipulation of verbal/visual imagery, his development of the instantaneous image, and his use of methods of pictorial composition, or the language of painting, as well as the visual creation of a painting or artifact in his fiction, presupposes a mastery of narrative technique which is exemplified by the nouveau roman of Nathalie Sarraute, but which Robbe-Grillet carries to an ultimate point, especially with the combination of the idiom of popular culture with fictional generation.

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[21] Lawrence Alloway, American Pop Art, pp. 18-19.

Just as the transfer of popular commercial images to the idiom of pop art depends on skill in the manipulation of the visual image, so Robbe-Grillet's use of "les littératures populaires" depends on his ability to manipulate the text in various ways, one of which has been defined by Franklin J. Matthews as the ability to create certain "luttes intérieures," the most visible of which he believes, in La Maison de rendez-vous, is the struggle to obtain the position of the narrator.[22] But he arrives only at the conclusion that each place, object, and person tries to recapture the story for its own benefit. Robbe-Grillet himself is explicit about this activity of the text:

> Dans la Maison de rendez-vous, la narration est reprise d'abord par les personnages (le gros homme rouge, Johnson, Manneret, Lady Ava, etc.), puis par des lieux ou des objets (le théâtre, la cour où sont rangés tous les accessoires, l'illustré chinois) et à la fin on a l'impression que tous les éléments du récit, tous les décors, tous les événements, tous les instruments ou personnages ne sont que des voix narratrices en même temps que des objets narrés. Dans Projet pour une révolution cela m'a conduit encore plus loin: à la fin, tous les mots du livre sont en train de parler ensemble, et c'est eux le narrateur . . . . Et c'est à ce moment-là que je m'arrête, effectivement: au moment où toute la narration a été assumée par l'ensemble des objets narrés.[23]

The fonction créatrice is released to the surface of the text and to the objects which constitute that surface, including persons and places which act as objects, as

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[22] Franklin J. Matthews, "Un Écrivain non réconcilié," La Maison de rendez-vous, Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Double," No. 4 (1965; rpt. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1971), p. 181.

[23] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Sur les choix des générateurs," p. 169.

Matthews demonstrates in his article. Robbe-Grillet's use of the object in this manner, not in the depersonalized, dehumanized form Roland Barthes identifies in his early novels, makes the subject matter, including the elements of popular literature and popular culture, into a style which generates the fiction. Thus when he compares his "experiences" to those of Lichtenstein, in the integration into the artistic work of the object and images belonging to an acquisitive society, he joins pop art and the _nouveau roman_ under the shelter of a similar _sensibilité_, but also in relation to a particular technique.

The use made of images from comic strips in Lichtenstein's painting is of particular interest to Robbe-Grillet. Geno Baro's analysis of Lichtenstein's art relates these images not to his iconography but to his technique; the great store of images found by the artist in cartoons and advertising suggested to him a style attached to commercial art, but not even necessarily dependent upon the popular iconography. The qualities of the commercial images which attracted Lichtenstein belonged:

> . . . to the economics and techniques of their future. Lichtenstein, who is essentially a graphic artist, came to understand how the conventions that attach to commercial art as a result of its final dependence upon printing might be utilized to invigorate painting. The work of his maturity addresses itself to the problem of translating the formal idiosyncrasies of the one medium into the aesthetic formalities of the other. In Lichtenstein's painting technique is transformed into style.[24]

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[24] Gene Baro, "Roy Lichtenstein: Technique as Style," _Art International_, 12, No. 9 (Nov. 1968), 35.

In Lichtenstein's painting, then, the imagery or iconography is not so important per se, as the techniques used to produce that imagery, a statement one might make equally well about the generative function of objects in Robbe-Grillet's La Maison and Projet.

Recently Robbe-Grillet has demonstrated his interest in the erotic, comic book art of others in his prefaces to Pauline Réage's L'Histoire d'O with drawings by Guido Crépax (1975) and D.A.F. de Sade's La Nouvelle Justine with illustrations by G. Garnon (1979).[25] With Dans le labyrinthe the nouveau romancier had already begun to perceive the comic strip as one of the basic structural components of his text; "Ces images d'un soldat perdu dans la neige après une défaite qui, pour moi, étaient des images de bandes dessinées."[26] To take a single example near the beginning of the novel where the cheerless, wintry setting is described, one finds a technique controlled by pictorial elements similar to those in the American cartoons:

> Dehors il neige. Le vent chasse sur l'asphalte sombre du trottoir les fins cristaux secs, qui se déposent après chaque rafale en lignes blanches, parallèles, fourches, spirales, disloquées aussitôt, reprises aussitôt dans les tourbillons chassés au ras du sol, puis figés de nouveau, recomposant de nouvelles spirales, volutes, ondulations fourchues, arabesques mouvantes aussitôt disloquées. (p. 11)

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[25] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Introduction" L'Histoire d'O, Guido Crepax (Genève: Franco Maria Riaci, 1975); Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Préface," La Nouvelle Justine, G. Garnon (Paris: Éditions Borderie, 1979), pp. 7-9.

[26] Françoise van Rossum-Guyon, "Conclusion et perspectives: discussion," Nouveau roman: hier aujourd'hui, I, p. 421.

While this passage utilizes point, line, and pattern, as does Mathias' drawing, and the depiction of the rain on the window-pane, in Le Voyeur, the pictorial elements here are more sparse, immediate, and powerful, deriving more from a comic strip aesthetic, than from classical drawing techniques. There is a sharpness to the imagery of the snow as it is presented whirling through the air or moving along the ground. The parallel lines, the forks, spirals, scrolls, and arabesques, that control the composition of the image, are stronger than the element described--the snow. The same style of power and composition is found in Lichtenstein's cartoon derived images, including Girl (1965; New York, Private Collection). The interior form of the close-up of the girl's face is composed of ben day dots, while the shape of the face and the features are delineated in heavy black lines. The girl's hair takes its form from even heavier lines which in some places enlarge into dark areas, while the bangs "fork" sharply across the forehead. As the picture is a close-up, and as the points, lines, and patterns totally control the image on the canvas, the visual technique has considerable affinity with Robbe-Grillet's description in Dans le labyrinthe.

The resemblances between the techniques of pop art and those of fiction are quantitatively and qualitatively strongest, however, in La Maison and Projet. Renato Barilli notes that it is in the direction of the visual arts, and particularly pop art in the case of these novels, that one must look in order to understand the new adventure embarked upon at this point by the nouveau nouveau roman:

> En effet, si l'on considère la Maison de rendez-vous et Projet pour une révolution à New York, c'est-à-dire les deux cas les plus évidents et riches de "nouvelle aventure", on en décèle d'emblée le rapport avec le Pop Art et le Kitsch. C'est donc à des lieux visuels que la "nouvelle aventure" peut s'adresser avec grand profit.[27]

In a later essay Barilli goes so far as to suggest a similarity between Robbe-Grillet's La Maison and Projet, and pop art in terms of a topical repetoire: "une sorte de répertoire topique, où sont collectionnés tous les stéréotypes de l'imagination populaire (donc, une Pop-littérature, à côté d'un Pop-art)."[28] Franklin Matthews mentions briefly, in relation to the immutability of objects in La Maison, the pop aspects of the tableaux that take place in Lady Ava's house, "objets fabriqués en série et imperméables au vieillissement: les bouteilles de coca-cola ou les boîtes de conserve en matière plastique insérés dans les 'tableaux' du pop-art."[29] However, although Barilli hints at a systematic approach to the two art forms, and Matthews off-handedly mentions an example, the former develops the methodological implications no further, and the latter maintains no systematic analysis along the lines suggested.

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[27] Renato Barilli, "Nouveau roman: aboutissement du roman phénoménologique ou nouvelle aventure romanesque," p. 116.

[28] Renato Barilli, "Neutralisation et difference," Robbe-Grillet: analyse, théorie, Colloque de Cerisy, No. 1079, 10/18 (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1976), I, p. 403.

[29] Franklin Matthews, "Un Écrivain non réconcilié," pp. 178-79.

Without a careful examination of at least some of the many elements and techniques in the text of these two novels, which indicate Robbe-Grillet's affinity with the creative experience of pop art, and particular painters such as Lichtenstein, the term becomes a catchall phrase, essentially meaningless. The major problems presented by the attempt to define pop art were evident even in 1962, when it appeared on the New York art scene. In 1964 Robert Rosenblum wrote:

> So sensitive are the art world's antennae to the symptoms of historical change that in 1962, when some New York galleries began to exhibit pictures of vulgar subject matter, a new movement, Pop art, was instantly diagnosed and the mindless polemics began. As usual, the art in question was seldom looked at very closely and questions of definition and discrimination were ignored. Instead, things were quickly lumped together into a movement which called for wholesale approval or rejection. Presumably, one had to take sides, and various critics were considered to be either vigorously for or against it. But what was "it"? Considering that "it" was equated with viewpoints as divergent as those of Barry Goldwater and Terry Southern, one suspected that less violent politicking and more temperate thinking and seeing were in order. In fact, the term Pop art soon blanketed a host of artists whose styles, viewpoints, and quality could hardly have been more unlike. When one insisted that names be named, things got foggier. Were Rivers, Rauschenberg, Johns Pop artists? Well, yes and no. And what about Marisol, George Segal, Peter Saul? Well, maybe. But arguments, without names and definitions, continued.[30]

The immediate difficulty present in 1962 has since become the problem of historical definition not only within the various streams of New York art, but also in the diverse approaches found in California, England, and France. Thus when critics such as Barilli and Matthews use the term pop art, without qualifying it, in relation to Robbe-Grillet's fiction, their commentary is useless, and misleading to an uninformed audience. The differentiation between French nouveau réalisme and American pop art, already made in this chapter is absolutely necessary to an understanding of pop art elements in Robbe-Grillet's novels, especially because of the unusual circumstance that he is a French writer more interested in New York pop art than in the nouveau réalistes of his own country.

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[30] Robert Rosenblum, "Pop Art and Non-pop Art," Art and Literature, 5 (Summer 1964), p. 80.

Robbe-Grillet's work is connected with American pop art in two essential ways: the use of images from popular culture and the technique through which they are presented so as to become part of a particular aesthetic. Before exploring this topic as it appears in the two novels, however, a brief discussion of another of Robbe-Grillet's short stories is in order as an example of how such techniques function in a compressed form. Written in 1959, well before La Maison (1965) and Projet (1970), and published in 1963 in Instantanés, "Dans les couloirs du métropolitain," is a microcosmic example of several pop art style techniques.[31] This short story is divided into three parts, the first and last of which establish the general, visual style of the writing. The first section of the story entitled "L'Escalier mécanique" immediately delineates the instantaneous nature of the text, describing a group standing "immobile" at the bottom of an escalator. This same group of people is then depicted on the upward elevator, the movement in the text taking place not through the development of a linear, narrative discourse, but through "le regard, qui, descendant la série des degrés successifs" (p. 78), discovers the crowd, for the second time, but in a different position. The bodies of the people on the elevator are seen as paralysed "dans des poses à la fois détendues et rigides, en suspens, marquant la halte provisoire au milieu d'une course interrompue" (p. 78). The repetitive insistence on motionlessness, emphasized most strongly in the first paragraph of "L'Escalier mécanique," sets the stage for a text controlled by visual apprehension and "le regard," as well as the redundancy of a new narrative code.

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[31] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Dans les couloirs du métropolitain," Instantanés, pp. 77-91. All further references are to this edition and appear in the text.

The third part of the short story, "Derrière le portillon" primarily depicts the effects of a partial regard, the perspective from behind a closed automatic door. "Les deux battants fermés ne laissant entre eux qu'un intervalle médiocre, à peine discernable" (p. 90). The door itself forms a type of visual artifact, described in terms of the elements of pictorial composition, and drawn from elements of everyday life--the setting in the Paris metro:

> L'ensemble du système est peint en vert sombre, chacun des deux battants portant une grosse inscription blanche sur un fond rouge, rectangulaire, qui occupe presque toute sa largeur.

(p. 90)

Because of the crowd on the escalator, only the top line of the sign is visible: "Portillon automatique." At this point, visual artifact is juxtaposed against visual perspective; the reader is made aware of the existence of the entire visual surface, white superimposed on red superimposed on green, but at the same time from the narrative point of view constituted by le regard, only part of the door, and part of the sign, are visible. The partial nature of visual perspective is dwelt on again, immediately following the description of the door, in relationship to the space created by the semicircular vault of the metro station. Above the door, the vault is visible through a semicircular opening, as well as a part of the train platform, another part of the setting depicted using a visual language:

> Dans cette ouverture en demi-cercle apparaît ainsi un morceau de quai, très réduit, et, tout en haut sur la gauche, segment de cercle que soustend la corde oblique, constituée par le bord du quai, un fragment plus exigu encore du wagon arrêté contre celui-ci. (p. 91)

Having framed these elements within a semicircular area, Robbe-Grillet then proceeds to give a background for the area within this visual frame including a fragment of the platform, and of the car of the train, and eventually a foreground as well, "les chaussures et le bas des pantalons des hommes qui s'apprêtent à monter en voiture" (p. 92). The detail in the foreground increases: the trousers are dark, the shoes are black and dusty, and make almost imperceptible movements. But suddenly "tout se stabilise de nouveau" (p.

93), a reminder that elements apparent within the visual frame are always temporary, whether detailed or generalized, whether in partial or in full perspective.

The opening and closing sections of "Dans les couloirs du métropolitain" establish two elements of redundancy in a new narrative code, immobility or instantaneity of image, and the formative influence of the visual perspective, however it is controlled. Besides reinforcing the visual nature of the narrative, the first and third parts of the story provide an aesthetic frame for the second section, "Un Souterrain." From the title, one would expect these paragraphs to describe the movement through the corridors in the metro station, and ostensibly this is the topic: "Une foule clairsemée de gens pressés, marchant tous à la même vitesse, longe un couloir dépourvu de passages transversaux" (p. 85). But the real topic of "Un Souterrain" is the advertising posters which adorn the wall of the corridor, a series of identical ones which are placed at equal intervals. Drawing on this particular weapon in the arsenal of commercial imagery, in a story written in 1959, Robbe-Grillet prefigures American pop art's use of such iconography, which was developed by Andy Warhol in the early 1960's and which made its biggest breakthrough in 1962 with his celebration of the ads for Campbell's soup cans and Coca-Cola bottles. By placing this poster within the textual framework of instantaneous visual apprehension and visual language found in the other two parts of the short story, Robbe-Grillet establishes the poster as a visual artifact and structure, rather than as an example of verbal word-painting.

The subject of the poster seems to be a typically commercial, American one of the period, in contrast to the metro which is obviously French: a woman's head, with curly blonde hair, enlarged to between five and six feet high, and a bottle of pop. The head is turned in three-quarters view smiling at the crowds that hurry by, the mouth opening towards a bottle of soda pop inclined at a forty-five degree angle on the left of the picture. An advertising slogan appears in two lines, one word above the bottle and one word below the bottle. The description of the poster is repeated, supposedly with the justification that it also appears many times on the wall of the corridor, but more importantly as a visual technique of serialism or repetition that, along with the commercial subject matter, strengthens the visual alliance with Andy Warhol's work. John Russell notes that "Pop art was rooted . . . in certain perennial aspects of American life: the element of insistent repetition, for instance. Repetition of this kind gives off a visual drumbeat that calls on us to stop and pay attention."[32] Warhol's pop art fits most obviously into this category, with such works as 100 Soup Cans (1962; Buffalo, Albright-Knox Art Gallery), 4 Campbell's Soup Cans (1962; New York, Collection Mr. and Mrs. Leo Castelli), and

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[32] John Russell, The Meanings of Modern Art, p. 346.

Campbell's Soup (1965; New York, Museum of Modern Art). The two early paintings, oil on canvas, are serial within themselves; in the first, one-hundred beef noodle soup cans fill the picture, while in the second, the cans of four different kinds of soup are strategically balanced like building blocks towards the centre of the picture plane. The third, later work, oil silk-screened on canvas, depicts a single can of condensed tomato soup, but partakes of serialism nonetheless, as repetition exists externally in a series of separate canvases, as well as internally within a single painting.

Warhol's Marilyn Monroe Diptych (1962; Connecticut, Collection Mr. & Mrs. Burton Fremaine) with fifty pictures of the head of Marilyn Monroe repeated in two sections of acrylic on canvas, is an excellent example of the variety occurring within his repetitioous images, a technique paralleling Robbe-Grillet's narrative and visual use of diversity within redundancy. Lawrence Alloway observes that the painting is:

> . . . a good example of the variety that comes from this apparent mechanization of picture production. One panel is a blaze of bright, glamorous colour, the other is printed in black, with some images of her head clotted in paint and other images present only as a dry trace on canvas. The nuances of each image are as evident as the repetition . . . .[33]

In Robbe-Grillet's passage in "Un Souterrain" the poster appears in multiples not only because he directly states that many copies of it have been placed on the wall, but also because he multiplies it through his descriptive, visual technique, not with changes in colour and definition of line, as in Warhol's Marilyn, but through the addition of detail, use of image reversal, and interruption of visual perception. In describing the second poster Robbe-Grillet adds the information that the same bottle is "prêt à se répandre" and that the girl's smile is "impersonnel" (p. 86). Depicting the subway wall between the posters he provides a "mat" for the image: "un espace vide couvert de céramique blanche" (pp. 86-87). In the third poster he notes that the scene is frozen at the same moment, but adds that the lips appear to approach the bottle from which the liquid is "sur le point de couler" (p. 87), the wording "les lèvres s'approchent du goulot tendu" emphasizing the erotic symbolism also apparent in the development of the series. The image is reversed on the opposite walls of the corridor, as in a mirror reflection; "sur l'autre paroi du couloir, les mêmes éléments se reproduisent encore avec exactitude (à ceci près que les directions du regard et du goulot y sont interchangées)" (p. 87). In the final paragraph direct visual perception of the poster, by the man in the gray suit who is staring closely and intently at the enlarged nose, is interrupted by some of the pedestrians who unwittingly "s'avancent entre l'homme et l'affiche, dont ils interceptent alors le regard" (p. 88).

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[33] Lawrence Alloway, American Pop Art, p. 113.

While the mechanical element of the text is retained in the repetitive image of the poster, like Raymond Roussel's plots where the anecdote is a trajectory without content, "à la fois machine à reproduire et machine à modifier" ("Énigmes et transparence chez Raymond Roussel," p. 74), unlike Roussel's works, the modifications in Robbe-Grillet's story are visual rather than verbal in nature. An amazing coincidence exists in the resemblances between Robbe-Grillet's interpretation of Roussel's writing and Warhol's comments about life and about his art. In a well known interview Warhol states, "I think everybody should be a machine," an assertion which can be understood when he explains the difference between attitude and process in creating commercial art; straight commercial art is not machine-like because of the attitude of those involved. Warhol says of his former profession:

> I was getting paid for it, and did anything they told me to do. If they told me to draw a shoe, I'd do it, and if they told me to correct it, I would--I'd do anything they told me to do, correct it and do it right. I'd have to invent and now I don't; after all that 'correction,' those commercial drawings would have feelings, they would have a style. The attitude of those who hired me had feeling or something to it; they knew what they wanted, they insisted; sometimes they got very emotional. The process of doing work in commercial art was machine-like, but the attitude had feeling to it.[34]

The "machine aesthetic" which both Warhol and Robbe-Grillet refer to is part of the mediatory process of creation, that although it denies the anecdotal and anthropomorphic nature of art, does not extend dehumanization to life. For the person to become the machine, as Warhol suggests, is a way of emptying life of preconceived meanings; in art the machine attitude disposes of anecdote to highlight technique and style and the independent existence of the art work. What could be more machine-like than the redundancy and modification used as tools by both Warhol and Robbe-Grillet?

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[34] Andy Warhol, "Interview with G.R. Swenson: What is Pop Art?" Art News (November 1963); rpt. Pop Art Redefined, eds. John Russell and Suzi Gablik (New York: Praeger, 1969), pp. 116-17.

The iconography of the single poster, which includes the description of a bottle of soda pop, while related to Warhol's images in 210 Coca-Cola Bottles (1962; New York, Private Collection), places the most emphasis on the gigantic face of the blonde girl and from this perspective the image is linked most closely to one which appears in many of Lichtenstein's cartoon paintings. Although Robbe-Grillet's and Lichtenstein's depiction of the head derive from different sources, advertising and comic strips respectively, they both stem from popular culture, and the similarity of style in the way the image is described and represented cannot be ignored. While Lichtenstein has painted many blonde, female heads including Drowning Girl (1963; Seattle, Collection Mr. and Mrs Bagley Wright), Happy Tears (1964; Philadelphia, Collection Mr. and Mrs. Robert Kardon), We Rose up Slowly (1964; Darmstadt, Collection Karl Ströher), Nurse (1964; Darmstadt, Collection Karl Ströher), M-Maybe (1965; Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum), and Girl, already mentioned, Hopeless (1963; Paris, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Sonnabend) is the most likely example for two reasons. Firstly, the girl's head is enlarged so as to occupy the totality of the canvas, whereas in many of the other paintings areas of the canvas contain details apart from the head, and secondly the picture plane also contains words, as in the Robbe-Grillet poster.

Diane Waldman believes that one of the most important features of Lichtenstein's use of the comic strip is the change in scale, "the enlargement from the miniscule to easel or wall size." She outlines the consequences of this enlargement of the cartoon, noting its change into the status of a cultural sign and stereotype, accomplished by using this technique.[35] From the point of view of a comparison with Robbe-Grillet's poster image, it is the overwhelming effect of the blow-up in relation to the everyday environment which should be examined. Such an image, pasted on the walls of the subway, reduces man to miniscule importance in relation to the popular culture of which it is a sign; it takes over the surroundings and circumscribes the situation of man in the world through a visual code embodying the ideological system of the society that produces it. But through the transformation and integration of this code, or part of it, into a literary or plastic work, the image can escape this imprisonment. As Robbe-Grillet observes, he is interested in turning fragments of society's ideology away from their normal usage:

> Because ideology needs to be a totality, if a single

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[35] Diane Waldman, Roy Lichtenstein (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1969), pp. 16-17.

> point is contested, everything immediately collapses. That is why in this continual discourse I cut out fragments, and it is these fragments which serve to create my speech, to develop my own discourse. My discourse is not that of society, it is even opposed to society's discourse, but it uses the same elements . . . .[36]

The oversized image of the blonde, whether in the description of the poster or in the imitation of a comic strip, is delineated aesthetically so as to cut into the accepted discourse.

The original disengagement of a fragment from the ideological totality of a visual code takes place, in Lichtenstein's Hopeless, in the artistic process involved in enlarging and producing the image, outlined by Diane Waldman:

> Lichtenstein's working method is one that he established with the cartoon: a precision arrived at after a certain trial and error. He selects motifs from illustrations or other second-hand sources and recomposes these images, small in scale into equally small sketches . . . . Once the sketch is enlarged to the scale of the canvas and transfered, it is subject to a series of adjustments--of drawing, shape, and colour sequences. When he arrives at a satisfying image the benday dots are filled in by his assistants. He does everything else on the paintings himself. Within the appearance of regularity and impersonality that are a feature of his paintings there is an amazing wealth of detail--a love of contour, of the texture created by the juxtaposition of the benday dots with solid colour areas, of the irregular shape playing against the pure geometry of a rectangle, a circle or square; the thickness or thinness or a line and its placement; or the width of a color stripe.[37]

The mechanics of creation Lichtenstein employs to produce a comic strip painting are strong enough to stand alone, without mention of other aesthetic techniques, as proof that Lichtenstein transforms, rather than borrows from, the visual code of society's discourse. One finds here a careful and precise fabrication of a work of art similar to the process Robbe-Grillet describes as "une écriture" or way of writing:

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[36] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Order and Disorder in Film and Fiction," trans. Bruce Morrissette, Critical Inquiry, 4 (Autumn 1977), 10-11.

[37] Diane Waldman, Roy Lichtenstein, p. 17.

> Quand il [l'écrivain] pense à un roman futur, c'est toujours une écriture qui d'abord lui occupe l'esprit, et réclame sa main. Il a en tête des mouvements de phrases, des architectures, un vocabulaire, des constructions grammaticales, exactement comme un peintre a en tête des lignes et des couleurs. ("Sur quelques notions périmées," p. 41)

Line and colour are part of the language of visual construction, in addition to that of pictorial composition, just as Robbe-Grillet's grammar, phrases, and vocabulary delineate the composition of the text, and likewise its architecture and execution. The problem of ideological discourse and aesthetic code is definitively related to the style of creation. The metamorphosis of Lichtenstein's tearful blonde, which in the comic strip reinforces the ideology that places woman in a passive and cheapened romantic role, into an image of aesthetic interest is due to the technical reworking and reconstruction of the image that first isolates it from its place in the mass consumption of pulp reading material and then skilfully shapes it as a work of art. As a result the viewer "stands back," so to speak, from the ideology as well as from the image at its source; intellectual and visual perception are revised.

In Robbe-Grillet's "Un Souterrain" the setting in which the poster is described acts as a prop to the structuring and manipulation of the visual image. The use of contour, texture, colour, shape and line which constitute Lichtenstein's direct intervention in the material of popular culture must, in a fictional text, take on another form. The claustrophobic, underground corridor is a sign of how man's existence may be circumscribed if he accepts the ideological constraints of society's predetermined role models and its consumption of material goods, constraints reflected in the images that surround him. The corridor "dépourvu de passages transversaux" (p. 85) is like a prison of the mind where the external environment has been interiorized, as signified by the advertisement which, along with the ceramic wall delineates its confines. But just as Lichtenstein must free himself from the visual code of the comic strip, Robbe-Grillet must disengage his fiction from the ideological totality of traditional, realistic discourse which would merely depict man's situation, rather than reorder it according to a new discourse. To this end he employs one technique similar to Lichtenstein's: he describes the visual artifact as an enlargement. But in a verbal text, that cannot be a painting, the mere depiction of an enlargement is not enough. Although Robbe-Grillet frames this section of the story with the visual instantaneity of the first and last parts, it is essential for him to disrupt the literary code, a disruption not necessarily achieved by verbally restructuring an image.

To achieve this goal Robbe-Grillet manipulates the setting--the metro corridor and the people in it--as a structure. At the beginning of "Un Souterrain" he describes a crowd of people hurrying down a corridor, all walking at the same speed past a poster of a woman's head "presque aussi haute à elle seul qu'une des personnes de taille ordinaire qui défilent devant elle, d'un pas rapide, sans détourner le regard" (pp. 85-86). The movement of the crowd seems to contrast with the frozen image on the wall, the instantaneity of the visual artifact separating it from the flux of persons. But the opposition between instantaneity and flux begins to disintegrate with the serial description of the poster. The pop bottle stretches ever more urgently toward the mouth with each description, just as the mouth, with an invisible movement evident only in the glissements of the text approaches the top of the bottle. While the glissements may be compared with changing imagery in Warhol's serial paintings, they also constitute a form of erotic joke, the phallic symbol of the pop bottle grows ever more eager to spill into the "lèvres rouges" (p. 86) of the woman. In the midst of what is an apparently realistic and detailed description of the everyday setting in the metro, and of an element of popular commercial imagery, the sexual symbolism is a drole reminder that the squeaky clean image of the blonde so typical of advertising in the 1950's is a trick played on the public to convince them of two things:

firstly, that they should conform to the image and its implications about a certain lifestyle oriented towards consumption, but presumably highly moral nonetheless (as if conspicuous consumption could ever be considered moral), and secondly, that everyday reality, supposedly depicted in the image, is not given a priori but generated and controlled by social ideology and by the vested interests of those with money and power.

Robbe-Grillet's erotic joke fragments the prevailing ideology formulated by the poster and also breaks into the apparently bland and monotonous depiction of a "setting" through the glissements which are both visual and verbal, to create an original redundancy. The depiction of the poster breaks yet another visual code, beside that of enlargement, through the integration into the visual image of the words "encore" and "plus pure" (p. 86). Instead of labelling the poster, they help construct and delineate the pictorial composition. Above and below the bottle they create a visual structure which encloses it, and the words at the bottom are supported by a line: "sur une oblique légèrement montante par rapport au bord horizontal de celle-ci" (p. 86). This line directs the viewer's eye upwards towards the girl's mouth, another contribution to the erotic symbolism, but apart from their compositional interest the verbal elements of the poster are components of a fiction which nonetheless confronts the relationships between the visual and the verbal. The technique employed is similar to that in many of

Lichtenstein's cartoon paintings, including Hopeless, where the words "That's the way--it should have begun! But it's hopeless!" appear at the top of the picture enclosed in the typical balloon of comic strip dialogue.

Lichtenstein's particular aesthetic accomplishment in bringing together the verbal and the visual in this manner is remarked by Diane Waldman:

> Lichtenstein achieved one remarkable effect with the incorporation of the title or legend as a functioning element into the body of a work. Rather than using the title as appendage or accessory to the visual, as a label clue or as a play on illusion, Lichtenstein forced a direct confrontation between the verbal and the visual. Both the verbal and the visual statements exist on a single plane so that the image forms a totally integrated unit . . . . [The] emotional outpouring [of the words] is in marked contrast to the coolness of the technique and it is noteworthy that Lichtenstein chooses to utilize this apparent contrast between the style (cool) and the subject (hot) . . . . Cross references abound in a spirit of ironic play and bring with them an undeniable humor.[38]

Common to the American pop art idiom, the term "cool" refers to an impersonal style, as opposed to the emotiveness of the abstract expressionists, and the word "hot" indicates the personal and, in the example of the painting Hopeless, romantic subject matter. Waldman defines the relationships of the verbal to the visual in Lichtenstein's paintings on a two-dimensional picture plane: the cool style which opposes a three-dimensional illusion of reality, and which is a component of Lichtenstein's precision and aesthetic mastery. For the purposes of comparing his painting with Robbe-Grillet's fiction Lawrence Alloway's statement is even more pertinent, however, for he discusses the general effects of Lichtenstein's technique which are readily transferable to the depiction of a poster in "Un souterrain":

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[38] Diane Waldman, Roy Lichtenstein, p. 16.

> Comics are a mixed form, of course, combining verbal and visual discourse. In art, the weight of twentieth-century theory has been on the side of medium purity, despite Cubist and Dada collage and Surrealism. Lichtenstein's use of words not only resists implicitly the pressure for pure-medium art, it brings the tensions of high and low art into the structure of painting.[39]

The mixed form of Robbe-Grillet's fiction is evident in his repeated use of the visual artifact which first resembles the iconography of American pop art in "Dans les couloirs du métropolitain," and even more specifically in his visual technique. The use of a commercial image, an advertisement for soda pop "brings the tensions of high and low art" into the fictional structure, for Robbe-Grillet's images always relate to the textual structure, whatever their importance as content. In this instance the visual commercial image creates the tension of popular culture pitted against traditional culture where in a novel one would normally expect to find the pornographic or detective story format performing this function.

Waldman's analysis of the confrontation between the visual and the verbal in Lichtenstein's painting takes for granted that the use of a title "as a play on illusion" is an established convention in the painter's repertoire of techniques. Although it may be a convention to painters and to art critics, Robbe-Grillet's use of this element, in the title of etching which is so significant in Dans le labyrinthe, demonstrates that it is apparently not a convention common in fiction, as literary critics have not observed the discrepancy between the label "La Défaite de Reichenfels" and the image depicted. In Dans le labyrinthe Robbe-Grillet breaks the narrative code by using an accepted visual code; painting sets forth the path to be followed by fiction. Robbe-Grillet continues to follow in the steps of the painters, even catching up to and anticipating some of the techniques of pop art. Michel Butor aptly demonstrates in Les Mots dans la peinture that the use of words in paintings dates back to the sixteenth century, and that: ". . . la présence de ces mots ruine en effet le mur fondamental édifié par notre enseignement entre les lettres et les arts."[40] But their use in American pop art is made unique by the manipulation of connections between art and popular culture, or advertising, in paintings such as Lichtenstein's. Through the visual delineation of this type of artifact in a work of fiction, Robbe-Grillet seems to have foreseen the interest of words employed in a popular, art image. Andy Warhol's Saturday's Popeye (1960; Zürich, Galerie Bishofberger) and Dick Tracy (1960; Private collection) and Roy Lichtenstein's Look Mickey (1961;

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[39] Lawrence Alloway, Roy Lichtenstein, Modern Masters Series, No. 1 (New York: Abbeville Press, 1983), p. 24.

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[40] Michel Butor, Les Mots dans la peinture, Les Sentiers de la création (Genève: Éditions d'Art Albert Skira, 1969), p. 7.

Private collection), their earliest ventures in this art form, were painted one year and two years later, respectively, after Robbe-Grillet wrote his short story.

A more sustained experiment in object generation and the use of pop art techniques, La Maison de rendez-vous, was published six years later. Robbe-Grillet continues to use the poster as part of the visual support system for the structure of his fiction in this novel, although he extends the popular sources of his imagery to a magazine and a Chinese tabloid. The first paragraph of the novel lists the images, objects, and themes which will generate the text, most of which relate to "la chair des femmes," including "une affiche de spectacle" (p. 11), possibly referring to the plays that take place in Lady Ava's house. Posters appear again later in the book, this time as part of a listing of all the stereotyped tourist images of Hong Kong, such as its harbour and sugar-loaf hills, but a glissement is evident in the change from the first poster, an object describing an event, to the second poster as depicted as a visual composition:

> . . . les longues rues à galerie couverte dont les gros piliers carrés sont revêtus, du haut en bas, sur leurs quatres faces, par les enseignes verticales aux énormes idéogrammes: noirs sur fond jaune, noirs sur fond vert, blancs sur fond noir. (p. 142)

The colours and lines which delineate this poster are powerful and direct, a pictorial style that Lucy Lippard identifies in pop art as "instantly to the point, extroverted rather than introverted."[41] But while this may be true of the style in the description of the poster, and in pop art, Lippard's phrase does not apply to the iconography and the process of transformation from popular image to aesthetic context.

The word "idéogramme" is defined in Le Petit Robert as "Signe représentatif d'une idée, pouvant figurer un objet ou un son et représenter le mot qui désigne l'idée." The term applies, therefore, to the technical and aesthetic metamorphoses undergone by the elements taken from popular culture and commercial art, as they become part of a pop art painting. Waldman delineates the particularities of Lichtenstein's processes: sketching, enlargement, and transferal, followed by adjustments of style such as drawing, shape, and colour sequence. In Andy Warhol's art the process involves silk-screening photographic, news images or stencilling commercial labels; the use of the silk-screen dates from 1962 and involves the transferal of the image to an enlarged silk-screen that is later put down on a canvas and linked from the back, different amounts of ink and changes in pressure resulting in variations among his serial images.[42] The technical process in itself means that the artists are producing a type of ideogram, a visual sign representing or suggesting a picture from a comic strip or an ad for Campbell's soup, not the cartoons or the advertisements themselves. The iconography also attains an ideogrammatic level through Lichtenstein's powerful and direct style in the treatment of his blonde heroines from the cartoons; comic strips of the fifties such as The Heart of Juliet Jones with its stereotypically romantic and, if one may be permitted to say, soap-opera style heroine, display fine lines, much detail, little use of full close-ups, and variation in colour hue and tone, a style very different from Lichtenstein's strong, straightforward lines, blowups of the face, and pure, bright chroma.[43] Warhol's silk-screens on canvas, such as the single object in Campbell's Soup Can (1964; New York, Leo Castelli Gallery), have a painterly surface which self-consciously remind the viewer that they are reproductions, the texture as well as the slight irregulirties in colour and line a testimony to the aesthetic rather than the commercial nature of the image. As a result of technique and iconographical style, then, Lichtenstein's and Warhol's pop paintings become a form of ideogram, representing not the object pictured, but the ideas the object depicted is supposed to suggest: either popular culture or mass media advertising.

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[41] Lucy Lippard, "Introduction," Pop Art, ed. Lucy Lippard, p. 11.

[42] Lawrence Alloway, Pop Art, pp. 109, 113.

Robbe-Grillet's description of the large signs on the streets of Hong Kong is linked with Lichtenstein's and

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[43] Stan Drake, The Heart of Juliet Jones, written by Eliot Caplin (King Features Syndicate). The strip first appeared in the dailies in 1953 and in Sunday comics a year later; Example reproduced in The World Encyclopedia of Comics, ed. Maurice Horn, (New York: Chelsea House Pub., 1976), p. 377.

Warhol's pop art, both on the level of style, the bold use of colour and line over large surfaces, and on the level of the iconographical relationship to contemporary culture as it is filtered through an aesthetic medium; while Robbe-Grillet does not describe the images on the posters as particular objects the use of the term "idéogrammes" establishes the confrontation between the object and the visual depiction. The final mention of a poster in La Maison occurs as a particular detail which refers to the process of image transformation. Johnson, who at certain points in the story is depicted as a writer in such a way as to indicate to the reader that the novel is a self-conscious fiction, also plays the role of artist at times. At one point, he dresses for dinner "tout en annotant l'épreuve d'un placard publicitaire qu'il doit renvoyer après correction" (p. 164). This sentence incorporates the connection between the original object of commercial interest and its presentation as an advertisement, and overtly demonstrates the mediation process. The appearance of a poster in the novel at three places, beginning with the first paragraph, illuminates the delineation of the object as visual artifact, functioning both as fictional generator and as part of the visual technique which formulates the novel's surface structure. The first poster is described very generally as an advertisement for an erotic theatre performance, an event which takes place repeatedly in the novel. Posters next appear as huge signs on the streets of Hong Kong, exemplifying a relationship to the setting of the story that structures many incidents and images, as does the environment in "Dans les couloirs du metropolitain." Finally, the proof sheet corrected by Johnson relates to his commercial ventures, and through them to his erotic activities with young women. The poster image as generator is efficacious in two ways: it provides progressively more detailed information through the depiction of visual composition, about the visual techniques and iconography of the text, and it also shows how "tous les éléments du récit . . . ne sont que des voix narratrices en même temps que des objets narrés." The poster, the visual artifact as generator, participates as a narrative voice in the unfolding of the theatre performances, in the interaction between event and setting, and in Johnson's business dealings.

The magazine cover and the tabloid prove to be even stronger items of visual generation. Although they are mentioned as two different elements, both are pieces of litter picked out of the gutter by the Chinese street-sweeper, suggesting the built-in obsolescence of contemporary, consumer oriented culture. The visual imagery on the magazine and the tabloid is more important to the evolution of the novel than their particular format, but they are another sign of the popular, generative sources of the book. The picture that appears on the tabloid at the beginning of the novel, a huge European salon in which a party is taking place, is similar to the repeated mention of the setting and party at Lady Ava's:

> Sous une inscription horizontale en grands idéogrammes aux formes carrées, qui occupe tout le haut de la page, le dessin - de facture grossière - représente un vaste salon à l'européenne dont les boiseries très décorées de glaces et de stuc doivent vraisemblablement donner l'idée du luxe; quelques hommes en tenues sombres ou en spencers de teintes crème ou ivoire sont debout, ici et là, causant par petits groupes; au second plan, vers la gauche, derrière un buffet garni d'une nappe retombant jusqu'au sol, sur laquelle sont disposés de nombreux plats . . . . (p. 35)

The image reappears at the end of the novel on a magazine cover, in different detail, a glissement creating an ambiguity in the depiction of the visual artifact that, unlike the artifacts in Le Voyeur and La Jalousie, sustains itself at the level of surface structure: in part through its relationship with pop art imagery and technique which maintains two-dimensional images, and in part through its position in the self-generating structure of the fiction.

Perhaps of greatest interest in the examination of Robbe-Grillet's use of visual artifact in La Maison is the detailed description of the magazine cover about one third of the way through the novel, and the images which it generates. The magazine cover is once again examined by the street-sweeper, but having finished his perusal he turns the page and discovers on the back of the cover another image that is central to Robbe-Grillet's allusions to painting in La Maison:

> . . . ce côté-ci, beaucoup plus sali que l'autre, n'est en outre imprimé qu'en noir et blanc. La plus grande partie de la surface encore lisible y est

occupée par trois dessins stylisés, l'un au-dessous de l'autre, représentant la même jeune femme aux pommettes hautes et aux yeux à peine bridés, située toujours à peu près dans le même décor (une chambre vide et pauvre, meublée d'un simple lit de fer) avec le même costume (une robe-fourreau noire, de coupe traditionnelle) mais de plus en plus altéré.

Le premier de ces dessins la montre à demi étendue sur le bord du lit aux draps défraîchis et bouleversés (buste soulevé sur un coude, robe entrouverte jusqu'à la hanche sur la chair nue, visage renversé en arrière dans un sourire extatique, main qui retient encore la seringue vide, etc.); mais un second décor se superpose au premier dans toute la partie supérieure du cadre, occupant ce qui paraît être le champ du regard de la fille: là se multiplient les éléments d'un luxe naïf et surchargé, tels que parois ornées de stuc, colonnes sculptées, glaces aux encadrements baroques, torchères de bronze à sujets fantastiques, étoffes aux plis lourds, plafonds peints dans le goût du XVIII siècle, etc. Dans le second dessin, toute cette richesse de pacotille s'est évanouie: il ne reste plus que l'étroit lit de fer sur lequel la fille se trouve à présent enchaînée par les quatre membres, couchée sur le dos dans une posture tordue et disloquée, qui doit indiquer les vains efforts tentés pour se libérer de ses liens; dans ses mouvements convulsifs, sa robe s'est encore défaite davantage, la fente latérale est maintenant ouverte de bas en haut, découvrant un sein petit et rond (on peut donc constater ici que la fermeture à glissière se prolongeait jusqu'au cou, au lieu de redescendre le long de la face interne du bras, comme il avait été supposé d'abord sans grand souci de vraisemblance). Le troisième dessin est sans aucun doute symbolique: la fille n'y a plus ses chaînes, mais son corps inanimé, entièrement nu, est couché de travers sur le côté, moitié sur le lit où reposent les bras et le buste, moitié sur le sol où traînent les longues jambes aux genoux fléchis; la robe noire gît à terre, près d'une flaque de sang; une gigantesque aiguille à piqûres, de la taille d'une épée, transperce le cadavre de part en part, pénétrant par le sein pour ressortir par derrière au-dessous de la taille.

Chaque image est accompagnée d'une courte légende, dont les gros caractères chinois signifient, respectivement et dans l'ordre: "La drogue est un compagnon qui vous trompe", "La drogue est un tyran qui vous réduit en esclavage", "La drogue est un poision qui vous tuera". Malheureusement le balayeur ne sait pas lire. (pp. 78-80)

Upon first reading, this passage may appear to be a serial version of Robbe-Grillet's characteristic sado-erotic images, which have already been mentioned in connection with "La Chambre sécrete" and Projet; as the first paragraph of the novel indicates, this is unmistakably an important aspect of the drawings, generated by the imagination of the man for whom "La chair des femmes a toujours occupé . . . . une grande place dans mes rêves" (p. 11).

Undoubtedly, the images also originate with the stereotypical ones of pornographic literature which have pretensions to a redeeming factor to be found in the moral of the story behind them. Robbe-Grillet makes another joking remark about these pretentions when he notes "Malheureusement le balayeur ne sait pas lire." Only the eroticism will impress a man who is oriented towards the visual, not the moral of the tale which hides its real purposes behind a typical, linguistic cloak of puritanical hypocrisy. A comment on the sexual hypocrisy of contemporary, social ideologies is evident in one passage, a few pages later, which is generated by the design on the inside of the magazine cover. In this section a nude woman again reclines on a bed. In the story she is a prostitute about to sell herself permanently to Sir Ralph for a huge sum of money, but as a visual image she conjures up different affinities:

> Elle est étendue sur le dos dans les fourrures et le satin noir du lit à colonnes et regarde, au-dessus d'elle, le ciel agrémenté d'un miroir dans lequel son corps se reflète, conservant depuis le début de

> la scène la pose exacte de la Maïa, qui est un tableau célèbre de Manneret et la déesse de l'illusion. (p. 85)

The name Manneret refers to Edouard Manneret who is mentioned several times in the novel; by a slight _glissement_ the name easily becomes Édouard Manet and the scene a reference to his famous _Olympia_ (1863; Paris, Louvre) which so scandalized the French when it was exhibited in the Salon of 1865. Pierre Schneider's description of and commentary on _Olympia_ identifies its relationship to elements of Robbe-Grillet's imaginary description of the painting _Maïa_, a word which refers to the goddess of illusion. The woman in Manet's picture is a demimondaine, the status of the female depicted in _La Maison_:

> Manet had posed his model, Victorine Meurend . . . . wearing a black ribbon about her neck, a red orchid in her hair, silk slippers and a gold bracelet, and with a demonic black cat at her feet. Her frank stare challenging the viewer, she disdains the bouquet borne by her maid, a bouquet presumably sent by an admirer who is cooling his heels in another room.
>
> Paradoxically, because they were well acquainted with such women, the Parisian's shrieks of outrage ring false in a city where prostitutes were princesses . . . . Yet the audience was shocked . . . . Perhaps the reason lies less in Manet's subject than in his unfamiliar style. He forced viewers to look _at_ his picture instead of _into_ it, as they were used to doing. The space here is extremely shallow, even the couch seems to have no breadth and the colours appear to lie flat on the face of the canvas and only slowly resolve themselves into near and distant objects . . . . Manet forces the viewer to work at the picture . . . .[44]

Sir Ralph is kept in exactly the same position as

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[44] Pierre Schneider, _The World of Manet: 1832-1883_, Time-Life Library of Art (New York: Time-Life Books, 1968), p. 71.

"Olympia's" admirer, forced to cool his heels while Lauren decides whether or not she wishes to live with him.

Manet had copied Titian's Venus of Urbino (1538; Florence, Uffizi) while in Italy, and the painting derives from Titian's work. But Olympia was considered scandalous because of Manet's omission of certain traditional elements, as well as the boldness of his style. Olympia "attacked the hypocritical 'rules' for works depicting the female nude. These 'rules' permitted the painting of the nude female . . . . if suitably antique accessories and a background of Greek or Roman columns were included in the composition."[45] Manet leaves out Titian's window and columns and other minutiae of design found in the upper right corner. On the inside of the magazine cover in La Maison the first drawing is divided into two sections: a girl half-reclining on a bed with her dress pulled back to seductively expose naked flesh, and in the upper part "ornées de stuc, colonnes sculptées . . . étoffes aux plis lourds . . . dans le goût du XVIII siècle." Robbe-Grillet ironically juxtaposes a tawdry twentieth century setting with a tawdry eighteenth century one. Since it is this pornographic image of a reclining women which generates the scene with Lauren, along with the painting by "Manneret," the French author refers to both the image of Olympia and to the shocking impact it produced through omission of the "colonnes sculptés," and other elements of "refinement."

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[45] Maurice K. Symonds, et al., The Visual Arts (Melbourne: Jacaranda Press, 1972), p. 107.

The manner in which Robbe-Grillet breaks with traditional narrative technique, through a reference to a parallel attack on the nineteenth century visual code, is complex not only because it employs generative techniques, but also because it demonstrates an affinity with Robert Rauschenberg's incorporation of classical paintings of nudes. Rauschenberg's silk-screen paintings, beginning with 1962, juxtapose pictorial elements from magazines, newspapers and art books, amalgamating the images in collages or "combine paintings" and splashing them with paint. While Rauschenberg was not a mainstream pop artist, his assemblagist work was at first a precursor of pop art, and later continued in a parallel but different mode. The silk-screen paintings Rauschenberg produced between 1962 and 1964 were done entirely in black and white. The image central to Crocus (1962; New York, Leo Castelli) is Diego Velázquez's Venus and Cupid (1645 - 1648; London, National Gallery); the naked back of the woman is blurred, and splattered with paint, and she is surrounded by an army truck, mosquitoes, and the Cupid from the Velázquez painting. Rauschenberg's black and white painting is in sharp contrast to the coloured, soft tones of Velázquez's Venus, but most importantly his silk-screen also suggests that Robbe-Grillet refers to classical paintings other than Olympia, when he describes Maïa. Robbe-Grillet was well acquainted with Rauschenberg's work and much impressed with it by the time he published La Maison in 1965.[46] It is not impossible, therefore, that Rauschenberg's references in his collages to other famous nudes such as Ruben's The Toilet of Venus (1612 - 1615; Vienna, Liechtenstein Gallery) in his Trapeze (1964; Turin, Galerie Sperone) and his Tracer (1964; Collection Mr. and Mrs. Frank Titelman), could have inspired a similar technique of multiple references in La Maison. Titian's Venus of Urbino and Manet's Olympia, depict a woman reclining on a couch, but no mirror appears in either painting. In the description of the pornographic image in La Maison, mirrors in baroque frames appear in the upper portion of the first drawing, while a mirror over the bed of Lauren reflects her body as it holds the pose of "Maïa." In both Ruben's The Toilet of Venus and Velázquez's Venus and Cupid the women examine their faces in a mirror. The mirror in La Maison is a glissement away from the single reference to Olympia towards multiple visual references, in an assemblagist technique that is both verbal and visual at the same time.

The contemporary and pornographic style of integrating Manet's Olympia into the verbal/visual surface of the text, directs attention not only to possible inspirational sources in Rauschenberg's art, but also to Robbe-Grillet's anticipation of a source which was reinterpreted by mainstream American pop artists. Larry River's I Like

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[46] Personal interview with Alain Robbe-Grillet, 12 Oct. 1983.

Olympia in Black Face (1970; Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne) is one of the most striking and complex restatements, imposing in front of the white Olympia, black servant, and black cat, a black Olympia, white servant, and white cat. Jean Lipman and Richard Marshall remark:

> Larry Rivers's painted construction doubled Manet's idea for another kind of social comment, showing, like a transformed mirror image, a new white servant for the new black Olympia, with her matching white cat. This painted relief construction was part of a commission by the Menil Foundation for the Institute for the Arts at Rice University, Houston; Rivers was invited to create an ensemble of works symbolizing the history and condition of the American Negro. Commenting on the whole project, Rivers said (quoted by the black writer Charles Childs in the exhibition catalogue, Some American History): "Black life is a whole spectrum of people I've met and come to know at various times. It is a perception of race and culture with as many variables and dimensions as people are variable."[47]

The technique used by contemporary artists, when they draw upon modern masters as sources, is usually a frank borrowing, as frank as Robbe-Grillet's adaptation of Manet. They do not "as was common in earlier centuries, mask the borrowed element by blending it with other elements of the composition."[48] Mel Ramos' technique in Manet's Olympia (1974; Chicago, Collection Mr. and Mrs. Morton G. Neumann) is even more direct than Larry River's borrowing:

> Mel Ramos's title makes his straightforward satire immediately clear. His sleek, center-fold-type girl, with her bikini tan, wears Olympia's black ribbon around her neck, and her bracelet and shoe, all

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[47] Jean Lipman and Richard Marshall, Art about Art, Whitney Museum of Modern Art (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978), p. 99.

[48] Jean Lipman and Richard Marshall, Art about Art, p. 86.

> looking as right for the 1970s as for the 1860s. Her hairstyle and her servant's are noticeably updated however, and both women look at the unseen slick-magazine photographer with carefully fixed photogenic expressions. Details of drapery and dress are carefully true to the original, but a monkey casually replaces the cat.[49]

The restyling of the painting is deliberate and obvious; the artist anticipates that the spectator will make mental and visual comparisons. Thus the impact of the work lies as much in the tensions created by the similarities and differences between the nineteenth and twentieth century paintings as in Ramos' particular pop style. The updating of the woman's figure to that of a centerfold type of body using contemporary stereotypes in a similar way to Robbe-Grillet's revamping of the female figure into the pornographic stereotype, links the verbal and visual forms in the stylized and superficial context of popular culture.

In order to generate the framework of a visual artifact for the scene with Lauren and Sir Ralph, Robbe-Grillet provides a label, however, which clashes with the suggestion that the reference is to a painting by Manet. The title itself "la Maïa" may also be associated with Francisco Goya's The Naked Maja (c. 1798 - 1800; Madrid, Prado) which would explain the eighteenth century trappings in the upper part of the sketch which generates this scene in the novel. Far removed from Titian's ideal woman, at the opposite end of the spectrum of female beauty from Ruben's voluptuous Venus, and different even from the slightly coarse look of

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[49] Jean Lipman and Richard Marshall, Art about Art, p. 99.

Manet's Olympia, which Mel Ramos satirizes with his well rounded California blonde, the slender and refined beauty of Goya's eighteenth century nude is closer to the ideal beauty of the mid-twentieth century than any of the other women depicted. The connection of the scene in the novel to the painting by Goya pertains to two further code breaking associations which delineate this visual image in *La Maison*, one social, the other visual. Kenneth Clark observes that:

> The most famous *maja* of Goya's time was the aristocratic but highly unconventional thirteenth Duchess of Alba, whom Goya painted several times. The speculation that she posed for this blatantly erotic and exquisite painting understandably caused a furore in Spanish society.[50]

The mystery as to the particular subject of the *Maja* excited a social scandal in the eighteenth century, corresponding to the outrage aroused by the style of *Olympia* among art patrons of the nineteenth century. Clark also identifies in the appeal of *Maja's* particular feminine beauty "one of the rare instances in which a great artist has recognised the sexual instinct; and yet she is painted so coolly that she awakens no feelings of desire,"[51] intimating that Goya's painting is sexual but not sensuous. The same might be said of Mel Ramos' California nudes. The "cool," pop art style resists the "hot" subject matter; sexuality is portrayed but not sensuality.

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[50] Kenneth Clark, *Feminine Beauty* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980), Plate 115.

[51] Kenneth Clark, *Feminine Beauty*, pp. 25-26.

Robbe-Grillet's virtuosity in the use of visual references, and the prophetic nature of the manner in which they are formulated, is apparent in the single image of Maïa, the visual frame for Lauren's place in the text. It is generated by the most commonplace of images, that found in a pornographic or erotic magazine of popular culture, yet the iconography of even this drawing is such as to make possible the intricate associations with the historical development of a particular visual convention or code, the depiction of the nude female. At the same time that he uses these pictures to make a statement about the existence of the new narrative code of self-generation, Robbe-Grillet plays on a visual redundancy of the past to announce a literary redundancy of the future--the integration of elements of popular culture into the tradition of the novel. Drawing upon the most scandalous incidents in the history of such paintings; his technique serves as a reminder that a break in an aesthetic code may be linked with the dispersion of an ideological, social code. The early statement made in "Sur quelques notions perimées," that the only possible form of commitment for a writer to the revolution is to resolve, from the interior, the problems of language (p. 39), may seem at first to contradict the ideological implications of his later statements. In the same early essays he says, however, that in the long term, "par voie de conséquence obscure et lointaine," this is the only way the writer may eventually serve the revolution (p. 39), indicating that his attitude has remained consistent, while his techniques have become more sophisticated.

The greater recognition of exactly how literature may serve ideological and revolutionary purposes is apparent even in the title of the novel Projet pour une révolution à New York, but irony about the social element of revolution is still evident in what is ostensibly its content: violent eroticism, organized crime, and the illicit drug market. The revolution referred to in the title is basically an aesthetic one, such elements which involve the popular mythologies about life in the prototype of the large American city being subsumed to literary and visual techniques. The visual image in Projet frequently functions in such a way as to reveal the mythologies out of which contemporary ideology is created. Towards the end of the novel the narrator discloses that the events of the story, all of which are predicated on the existence of just such a city as New York, take place long after the city is in ruins:

> Ai-je déjà signalé que, même avant la révolution, toute la ville de New York, et en particulier l'île de Manhattan, était depuis longtemps en ruines? Je parle bien entendu des constructions de surface, à l'air prétendu libre. (p. 207)

In the world circumscribed by the fiction, the real New York never exists. If one keeps in mind that ideology was the word used by Marx in Die deutsche Ideologie (1845-46) "to deride the proposition that ideas are autonomous or the belief in the power of ideas to shape or determine reality;

or to argue that all ideas are socially determined,"[52] and that myth may mean "a widely held fallacy ([eg.] 'the myth of progress,' 'the American success myth'),"[53] it becomes apparent that in this later novel Robbe-Grillet is attacking an ideological order as well as a narrative code. The ideology of technological progress and its attendant consequences embodied in the idea of the large modern, twentieth century city is revealed as such, by the suggestion that it played no part in the novel; it was "depuis longtemps en ruines." The city in the story is the mythology of a city and the violence that takes place is the mythology of violence.

Robbe-Grillet's revelation of ideology as mythology in Projet highlights the fact that the significance of the development of a self-conscious, aesthetic mythology is its ability to destroy preconceived ideologies which have pretensions to objective reality. John Cruickshank says of Robbe-Grillet's fiction:

> He is not of course proposing that any man can live without creating his own myths, but he is proposing that we should not be allowed to live with myths so ingrained in us that we mistake them for something inherent in the structure of the universe.[54]

Lichtenstein also deals with popular culture on the level of mythology, especially in the group of cartoon derived paintings about war such as *Brattata* (1962; Tehran, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art), *Takka Takka* (1962; Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Museum), *Wham!* (1963; London, Tate Gallery), *Varoom* (1963; New York, Collection Mr. and Mrs. John Powers), *O.K. Hot Shot* (1963; Turin, Collection Remo Morone), *Torpedo . . . los* (1963; Illinois, Collection Mr. and Mrs. Robert Mayer), and *As I Opened Fire* (1964; Amsterdam, Collection Stedelijk Museum). In an interview with Diane Waldman Lichtenstein delineates his aesthetic and ideological purpose in producing such works:

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[52] Daniel Bell, "Ideology," The Harper Dictionary of Modern Thought.

[53] M.H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1971), p. 103.

[54] John Cruickshank, The Twentieth Century, Vol. VI of French Literature and its Background (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 291.

> DW Did you see the war cartoons, at the time you were doing them, as a comment on War?
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> RL Well, it wasn't the purpose; but I realized it would have that effect.
>
> DW They are discussed now as significant statements in relation to the Vietnam war which developed, of course, afterwards.
>
> RL It is no mystery that we were very big on protecting our interests around the world.
>
> DW I didn't know if you meant it to be a comment on war or just on the aggressive nature of America.
>
> RL A minor purpose of my war paintings is to put military aggressiveness in an absurd light. My personal opinion is that much of our foreign policy has been unbelievably terrifying, but this is not what my work is about and I don't want to capitalize on this popular position. My work is more about our American definition of images and visual communication.[55]

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[55] "Lichtenstein interviewed by Diane Waldman," *Roy Lichtenstein*, Diane Waldman (New York: Harry Abrams, 1971),

The fury of war displayed in Lichtenstein's paintings plays the same role as the vicious world of crime does in Robbe-Grillet's *Projet*; it is an iconographical or thematic correlative of an aesthetic statement which incorporates a contemporary mythology: in Lichtenstein's case the particular American ideology which glorifies the horrors of war as a fight for freedom, and in Robbe-Grillet's text the ideology of the city as a place that is uniformly evil.

The attack on an ideological order is sustained in Lichtenstein's "war" paintings on an aesthetic level nonetheless. *O.K. Hot Shot* exemplifies many of the techniques the artist deploys in this impressive group, including the facial enlargement also found in the soap-opera style comic paintings. Diane Waldman observes that:

> Close-up images, drastically cropped and enlarged, are typical of the war paintings for the simple reason that they heighten the drama. This method allows the artist to preserve as many of the details of the event as he wants without committing himself to explanation or narrative.[56]

In *O.K. Hot Shot* the cropped face of a fighter pilot, head encased in a helmet, totally occupies the right side of the canvas, along with the comic strip balloon containing the words "Okay, hot-shot, okay! I'm pouring!" On the lower left side of the image the word "Voop!" appears in enormous yellow letters against a background of irregular, concentric circles of white, red ben day dots, red, and black, which

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[55] (cont'd) p. 27.

[56] Diane Waldman, *Roy Lichtenstein*, p. 17.

shoots out as if in tongues of flame to coincide with black areas which delineate the pilot's face. The enemy plane in the upper left corner seems to be pulled into the background more by the simple nature of its design, than by any effect of perspective. The impact of the composition which curtails narrative to a single moment of danger and heroism, combined with the notion that this danger has been avoided as shots blaze through the sky rather than through the plane, results in the reduction of the reality of war to the American image of it depicted in propaganda films and comic strips. On the one hand the image condenses narrative so as to present war as it appears in popular culture, but on the other hand the condensation acts as a fragmentation of this culture and the ideology it represents. Like Robbe-Grillet's presentation of the contemporary city and its violence in Projet, where the use of generation rather than linear narrative fragments the violence, the elements of Lichtenstein's paintings "are only fragments of society's ideology which . . . [he] turn[s] away from their normal usage."

The giant poster which appears in the subway in Projet, an intertextual reference and a redundancy from "Dans les couloirs du metropolitain," exhibits a similar break with the ideology of popular culture to that accomplished by Lichtenstein's visual, formal techniques. In Projet the poster is less detailed than in the short story, but given Robbe-Grillet's insistence on the importance of intertextuality within his oeuvre, the reader might be expected to consider this image as an embellishment of the early one, the added information being that the eyes of the young woman are covered with a black bandage. Other facts about the nature of the visual image are appended that call into question the visual status of the poster, in a manner similar to Lichtenstein's placement of the comic strip in an ambiguous aesthetic position through the techniques which transform it into a painting. Laura sees the poster through the window of the subway train:

> Autant que la vitesse du convoi permet d'en juger, il doit s'agir d'une bonne reproduction de photographie en couleur, aux teintes pastel, dont le modelé ressort admirablement sur un fond assez sombre. (p. 111)

The colouring has changed from the bright yellows and reds described in "Un Souterrain" to subdued tones which suggest not so much the brashness of commercial art as the illusory realism of commercial photography, consistent with the suggestion that the poster is the reproduction of a photograph. While the idea of the reproduction of a photograph of a painting is an intertextual reference to Les Gommes and the painter in the window display, the stress on reproduction as a correlative of interiorization and subjectivity changes in Projet to an emphasis on the possible inner acceptance or rejection of the ideology embodied in the poster.

The blindfolded girl represents a step beyond the blonde "aux yeux encadrés de cils très longs" in "Un Souterrain," and thus she symbolizes the expansion of the new narrative code of redundancy into the realm of sado-eroticism, as a commentary on social ideology. The relationships between two such apparently diverse topics is explained by Robbe-Grillet:

> One can only work against ideology on the one hand by pointing it out, and on the other hand in making it grind so that it can be heard, so that it will not be innocent, so it will lose in fact that beautiful mask of innocence and being natural. First one creates something which points it out, erotic elements for example. You know to what extent violence, erotic violence in particular, is important in our whole contemporary mythology.[57]

Robbe-Grillet believes that there is a direct link between violent eroticism and a particular ideology, an ideology which is unmasked in part when the myth of sado-eroticism is exposed by its repeated use as a narrative code throughout Projet, including the poster on the subway wall. From his description of the poster, one might suspect that Robbe-Grillet wishes to connect this form of eroticism with a particular revolutionary principle:

> Juste en-dessous d'un menton au dessin très pur, on lit, tracé en écriture cursive et seul déchiffrable du texte probablement laconique de cette publicité, le mot: "Demain . . ." Sur la dernière affiche de la série, à l'éxtremité du quai, un inconnu a rajouté à la suite, d'une main adroite reproduisant la même forme de caractère et la même ordonnance, mais à peinture rouge au lieu du bleu ciel des lettres imprimées: "la Révolution. (p. 111)

But it is apparent in the statement quoted earlier that he considers sado-eroticism as a form of contemporary mythology participating in the subjectivity of ideology. The revolutionary aspect of this particular visual image in

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[57] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Order and Disorder in Film and Fiction," p. 19.

Projet is not the principle of eroticism. Instead it is the principle inherent in visual serialism or repetition: only on the last of a long line of images does one find, printed in red, the words "la Révolution." Only after the prevailing ideology has been pointed out and made to "grind," can one approach the concept of revolution, and it is clear in Robbe-Grillet's text that for him the concept remains on the level of fictional and visual codes.

Having established the particular nature of the subjectivity which is commented upon in the poster image, that it is an ideological one, it is possible to gain a better understanding of the first subway poster depicted in Projet:

> L'affiche bariolée se reproduit à plusieurs dizaines d'exemplaires, collés côte à côte tout au long du couloir de correspondance. Le titre de la pièce est: "Le sang des rêves." Le personnage masculin est un nègre . . . . Le long couloir, d'un bout à l'autre, est vide et silencieux, très sale comme tous ceux de cette ligne de métro, jonché de papiers divers . . . . L'affiche toute neuve qui s'étend à perte de vue, en arrière comme en avant, tranche aussi par sa netteté sur le reste des murs, recouverts d'une céramique vernisée qui a dû être blanche à l'origine, mais dont la surface est à présent fendue, écaillée . . . . (pp. 28-29)

Although the description of the ceramic tiles suggests the passage of time, these are the same walls that appear in the short story, which most certainly are those of the Paris metro, as one may understand from the title "Dans les couloirs du métropolitain." The term métropolitain refers particularly to the term for the Paris underground before 1891, when it was renamed métro. "Le couloir de correspondance" is also a term applied to the Paris metro, not to the New York subway. The North American city and the violent lifestyle depicted in the novel do not, however, belong to Paris, New York, or to any city in particular; they are generated by "le sang des rêves," the ideology which has been integrated into the unconscious or subconscious in the form of a myth about the modern urban scene. In Projet Robbe-Grillet does not depart completely from his early use of fictional structures of imagination and dream. But he does show a new concern with and desire to explore the social ideologies which may be manipulated in the imaginative fictional structure.

Yet another poster in the subway demonstrates the ideological and visual manipulation of advertising and popular culture in a manner close to one of the best known, original examples of British pop art. This poster depicts a girl covered with blood in the middle of her living room rug, a generative development of the blood and violence in the other two images. But as an advertisement it is very different from Lichtenstein's restatements of popular culture:

> . . . il y avait la grand affiche pour le nouveau détersif Johnson.
> --Celle de fille qui baigne dans son sang, au milieu du tapis d'un salon moderne, tout en nylon blanc?
> --Oui, c'est ça. Je décris la disposition du corps? Les couteaux, les cordes et toute le reste?
> --Non. Tu l'as déjà fait dix fois. Le texte seulement.
> --Le texte dit: "Hier, c'était un drame . . . Aujourd'hui, une pincée de lessive diastastique Johnson et la moquette est comme neuve." Au-dessous, un type avait écrit au marqueur à feutre: "et

demain, la révolution." (pp. 158-59)

The iconography and style of this poster is closer to Richard Hamilton's direct borrowings from mass advertising than to the deliberately reworked technique of Lichtenstein's comic strip paintings. His collage Just What is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing? (1956; California, Collection Mr. Edwin Janss), is a collection of most of the elements of popular culture which American pop art was later to disperse and refine. A comic book picture entitled Young Romance hangs on the wall of a living room, with stairs in the left background leading up to an exit to a street and a theatre marquee seen through the window. On the chair sits a newspaper folded so as to make the advertisement section visible, a lampshade with a Ford insignia appears on a lamp in the middle background, while on a couch lounges a nude stripper, with sequins attached to her breasts, and a lampshape for a hat. A muscle-man stands in the middle of the room holding a lollipop with the word "pop" emblazoned on it in large letters; there is a television set and a tape recorder as well, and on the stairs a woman vacuuming.

While Robbe-Grillet does not use such a quantity of objects in his image, it is clearly more diffuse than the posters related to the Lichtenstein enlargements, and the commercial for a detergent has an affinity with the new and improved vacuum cleaner depicted in the Hamilton painting, in its emphasis on the range of cleaners apparently so essential to contemporary life. Hamilton's collage and Robbe-Grillet's image, in this case, both provide a living room setting, background or setting being a visual element markedly lacking in both Lichtenstein's and Warhol's paintings. The Johnson detergent commercial thus has more direct sociological implications than the other subway posters about the role of the home, the housewife, and the individual in society. It appears that as Robbe-Grillet made progressively more use of elements of popular culture, particularly visual images, they eventually crystallized into a mythology relating to the contemporary urban scene, a mythology which also made it necessary to explore and discredit the ideology to which it is connected, if the fictional text was to maintain its distance from "notions périmées." Otherwise the employment of visual generators drawn from popular culture would have allowed the text to be recuperated according to the structures of this prevailing ideology. When Robbe-Grillet states that his discourse is opposed to society's discourse he adds that "it uses the same elements to such an extent that the danger often arises of another misunderstanding. The danger is that of reestablishing ideological continuity . . . ."[58] But for the blood, knives, and ropes described or suggested in the Johnson commercial, the sociological element of the iconography, the setting in a particular room, would have reestablished this continuity.

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[58] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Order and Disorder in Film and Fiction," p. 11.

Robbe-Grillet's use of ideology in *Projet* is apparently another way of dealing with the problem he delineates and attempts to solve in the early novels: the definition of man's Being-in-the-world and the essentially subjective nature of his relationship with the objects around him, which may best be understood through the sense of sight. In *Projet* he is most concerned with the effect of visual representation, not visual perception, and the ideology imposed upon man by the visual images that surround him as part of his everyday life. There is almost no reference to traditional iconography found in the famous works of Titian, Rubens, Goya, and Manet, whereas in *La Maison* there is a combination of citations from the traditional and the popular visual code. The use of a system of generative images frees the text from the continual concern with, and assertion of, its independent *fonction créatrice* so central to the early novels. Thus Robbe-Grillet is freer to raise ideological problems because he can be sure that the generative technique will maintain the aesthetic parameters of his analysis, and protect him from the mistaken attempt to provide the same methodological solutions to literary and social difficulties. The new code of narrative redundancy is liberated, paradoxically, by the very elements of contemporary ideology which are to be isolated and condemned.

This principle also applies to other forms of popular culture used as generators in *Projet*, for instance the structures and elements of detective narrative. Not surprisingly, Robbe-Grillet in this respect, too, proceeds in ways that are analogous to the methods Lichtenstein uses in pop art. Lichtenstein employs the narrative form of the comic strip, in both the blonde heroine group of works and in the war paintings, as a type of generator, which when it is transformed aesthetically highlights the self-conscious nature of the visual image. The cover picture to the detective novel, mentioned repeatedly in Projet, serves as a generator of the story, and as a suggestion about narrative code, which is inserted into the text in the parallel form of a visual code:

> La couverture, dont les couleurs à la fois vives et plates semblent bien conformes à la tradition du genre, ne me rappelle pourtant aucune de celles qui me sont familières, que je connais même par coeur dans leurs moindres détails . . . . (pp. 84-85)

The colours of the cover "à la fois vives et plates" resemble the tones of the original comic strips from which Lichtenstein derives his art, such as The Heart of Juliet Jones; on the other hand none of the details from the known source are recognizable, thus suggesting Lichtenstein's reformulation in his art. The affinity between Lichtenstein's use of the visual code of the comic strip and Robbe-Grillet's manipulation of the narrative code of the detective story serves to indicate the artificiality of the text. A reminder of the role played by the many types of pictures used in Robbe-Grillet's previous texts, it is at the same time a culmination of the evolution in his manipulation of the visual artifact.

## VII. CONCLUSION

In the introduction to this thesis I outline the contemporary nature of the fiction by the novelist under discussion, Alain Robbe-Grillet, in particular the central role it played in the development of the nouveau roman in France, a literary form that, particularly through his work, has had a considerable influence on the development of international post-modernism in the novel. In his essays about the nouveau roman, and in his fiction, he attacks the unquestioning acceptance of the Balzacian, realist tradition and poses alternatives to this approach in the form of the anti-hero, of the plot controlled by style and other elements of form, and of a commitment to literary rather than social change. Robbe-Grillet's theoretical statements about the visual techniques which he considers particularly pertinent to the development of the new novel make it necessary to establish a link between verbal and visual mediums before exploring, more specifically, the relationship between his novels and certain paintings, or movements in contemporary art. These statements apply particularly to his novels written between 1949 and 1970, because after that time he began to work in a verbal/visual format incorporating works by artists such as Magritte, Delvaux, and Rauschenberg in the published volumes, an approach to literary creation which indicates the existence of different problems and the need to develop a different critical methodology. Methodological debates about the study of the relationships between literature and the visual arts had a limited usefulness to the task at hand, and the most helpful suggestions were the pragmatic ones linked with a close reading of the text and a thorough knowledge of critical and historical opinion about the types of painting to be compared to the fictions in question. Robbe-Grillet's own statements about visual technique, and his interest in surrealist painting and pop art, did provide, however, a sound basis for an exploration of his novels from _Un Régicide_ to _Projet pour une révolution à New York_, and for a close comparison with the techniques, images, and themes characteristic of such trends in modern art as Giorgio de Chirico's metaphysical painting, René Magritte's surrealist works, and Roy Lichtenstein's and Andy Warhol's pop art. In analysing Robbe-Grillet's fictions from the point of view of my topic, I did not attempt to re-interpret the individual texts in a holistic manner, but tried to single out characteristic authorial procedures and to trace their diachronic evolution.

The basis of the inquiry is developed in the second chapter through a critical discussion of the present state of studies about the relationship of Robbe-Grillet's writing to modern art and painting. Unfortunately a lack of close analysis of the text makes most such studies unsatisfactory, if not misleading, while overall generalizations about his writing and certain similarities with movements in modern painting such as surrealism can result in flagrant misconceptions. Roland Barthes' understanding of the use of the visual adjective in Robbe-Grillet's fiction, the *être là* of the object, Olga Bernal's recognition of the central importance of Robbe-Grillet's notion of "le creux au coeur de la réalité," and Ben Stoltzfus' observation that the depiction of the object in Robbe-Grillet's novels is dependent on man's consciousness of himself in the world, direct attention to the possibility that the French author's notion of the visual may be related to Heidegger's philosophical concept of *Dasein*, and the *Sicht* and *Nichts* which constitute part of this *Dasein*.

Robbe-Grillet himself acknowledges a superficial acquaintance with the concept of *Dasein*, but notes that his affinities with Heidegger's thought are due more to a similar *sensibilité* than to direct influence. The same is true, he says, of his appreciation of surrealist art, but he is more precise about his understanding of and affinity with American pop art. Robbe-Grillet's own statements about the problems of creation in relation to such matters are particularly important, given his stress on the necessity of the author's critical and self-conscious approach towards the fiction of the *nouveau roman*. Out of the comments in *Pour un nouveau roman* and in scattered essays and interviews emerge a number of suggestions about visual techniques, and about artists with whom Robbe-Grillet has creative affinities. The techniques include the use in fiction of the visual as opposed to the analogical adjective, of "l'oeil d'homme" as the measure of objects, which should be considered apart from their anthropomorphic context, of the description of objects as opaque so that they may escape humanistic complicity, of a visual, narrative viewpoint which effaces the omniscient narrator, of outline and shape as the most reliable visual sensations by which man may define his situation in the world, of instantaneity or the frozen gesture, and of visual detail which strengthens the interest of the movement of the description and the _fonction créatrice_ of the text. Many of these techniques may be related to Heidegger's notion of _Dasein_ and the undermining of the Cartesian world view in which the perception of physical reality is the unacknowledged result of human subjectivity, in favour of an awareness of the existence of objects as the disclosed subjectivity of the human mind. The interpretation of these visual techniques in light of the Heideggerian notion of _Sicht_ allows them to be summarized as a style of visual apprehension, in opposition to the traditional style of visual description. Visual description in literature depicts a metaphorical perception of objects, whereas visual apprehension presents objects as they exist, subjectively, but without the customary anthropomorphic importance.

From Robbe-Grillet's discussion of American pop art it is apparent that he feels an affinity with it, both in its manipulation of formal factors and as a system for maintaining a freedom within the constraints of society's discourse and ideology. This affinity arises in part from his appreciation of the painting of the leading exponent of this art, Roy Lichtenstein, and of a personal acquaintance with the painter himself. In his later films where he acknowledges the significance of Klein, Klee, Mondrian, and Duchamp, he suggests that such images constitute a meditation on the origins of contemporary painting; the allusion to Duchamp in particular, the most significant symbol of the twentieth century avant-garde in the visual arts, indicates his awareness of the problems of visual code breaking faced by such a modern master. Apart from his observation that the relationship of his work to that of the surrealist painters is primarily a question of sensibilité, he seldom discusses this aspect of his work in his interviews. Evidence of this interest must be deduced from the verbal/visual volumes with the paintings and etchings by Magritte and Delvaux and his preface to an illustrated version of Lautréamont's Les Chants de Maldoror, rather than from the writer's own observations, but the existence of these later publications aids in establishing the fact of visual, surrealist affinities in novels such as Un Régicide, Les Gommes, and Le Voyeur. Especially since the appearance of the dual media texts, Robbe-Grillet has made convincing observations about the problem of the intermediate function of the verbal in descriptive imagery, postulating the difference between linguistic structure and the instantaneous visual image as it appears briefly in the text. It seems that in dealing directly with paintings and other visual images Robbe-Grillet's early ideas about instantaneity have crystallized in a concept particularly useful in understanding the application of his visual technique even to his early novels. The creative process that he engages in with the verbal/visual works is not only relevant to an understanding of the relationship between modern fiction and painting, therefore, but also to the visual mode of the text itself.

Robbe-Grillet is acquainted with the materials and methods of painting, independently from literary activities: the role of the canvas or "support," the importance of colour and brushwork, mentioned in an interview, along with his collage style integretation of newspapers into his own untitled art works demonstrate a certain level of knowledge about the processes and techniques necessary to the production of visual art. This notion is substantiated by the appearance of elements of pictorial design in his early novels, elements of which are examined in the third chapter. The exploitation of the language of pictorial composition is the most obvious aspect of his use of visual design in these novels, particularly in Le Voyeur and La Jalousie, in the disruptive use of precise geometrical terminology, to depict a three-dimensional perspective which disintegrates through the ambiguity of the description. In Une Régicide and in Dans le labyrinthe the description of settings becomes an ensemble of line, plane, and colour, turning away from the complicity with social class structure characteristic of Balzac's style of description, towards a more impersonal depiction according to visual design. Robbe-Grillet's awareness of the effects of visual perception is apparent in his remarks on the importance of knowing the proximity or distance of an object under observation in "Nature, humanisme, tragédie," and is demonstrated in the description of the figure eight in Le Voyeur, which Mathias sees on the embankment as the ship approaches the pier. The exploration of visual perception becomes even more detailed in Robbe-Grillet's novels when he explores the intermediate function of a "lens" such as the distorted window-pane in La Jalousie, or the glass divider in Un Régicide which produces the same effect on vision as a pair of inverted opera glasses. That Robbe-Grillet approaches the depiction of objects according to visual design from the dual perspective of the language and of elements relating both to the artist's production of a composition and of the viewer's perception of objects, parallels his awareness of the two sides of the text, that created by the writer and that re-created by the reader.

Both sides enter into the interpretation of the visual or fictional code, although no elucidation is ever final and definitive due to the continuous interaction of three elements: the writer, the text, and the reader; or on a parallel, visual level, the artist, the visual artifact, and the viewer. Robbe-Grillet's repeated use of visual artifacts in his novels, including photos, drawings, etchings, paintings, and posters, reflects his wish to emphasize this function, as well as to strengthen a new narrative code of redundancy by incorporating a visual code within it that is at the same time part of the linguistic structure of the text and an independent pictorial entity. The *glissements* between verbal and visual also produce a sense of ambiguity which is relevant to the idea of subjectivity as delineated by Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*, and the *Nichts* that forms the basis of man's Being-in-the-world. In *Dans le labyrinthe* the *Nichts* is manifested visually in the manipulation of pictorial composition and language through the use of light, which helps create ambiguity and correlates with man's uncertain situation in the world: it delineates the quest of the soldier, lost and wandering, constantly facing death. The visual artifact which appears at the beginning of the novel, the etching of the tavern scene, is also ambiguous; at some moments it is part of the narrative text and the action, at others part of a visual composition.

While it is possible to analyse a relationship between the visual artifacts presented in *Les Gommes* and René Magritte's painting *La Condition humaine*, on the philosophical basis of an internalization of visual perceptions, Robbe-Grillet's use and evolution of surrealist concepts can best be understood by an examination of his two important essays on the minor surrealist writers, Bousquet and Roussel. The outcome of such an analysis, which shows that he disagrees with Breton's surrealist methods of automatism, and accepts the formal lucidity of marginal surrealists such as Bousquet and Roussel, also indicates correlation with verist painters such as Magritte, as opposed to automatists such as Tanguy. It is possible to establish affinities between Robbe-Grillet's concepts of fiction and surrealism on a thematic level as well, including shared iconography along with the depiction of irrational forces at work in dream imagery and childhood memories. But the most significant resemblances involve memory, dream, and imagination as structures designed to produce new codes and to shock the reader or observer into new modes of perception.

Although Robbe-Grillet makes use of the techniques of his predecessors freely, through modification and extension, it is not astonishing that his three first novels demonstrate a strong affinity with the art of one of the early twentieth century's most original destroyer of visual codes, Giorgio de Chirico, during his metaphysical period of 1910-1917, which had a profound influence on surrealist writers and painters. The iconographical resemblances between, for example, the depiction of the father in The Child's Brain and the description of the photograph of the king in Un Régicide, the "Tower Series" of paintings and "La Maison Dieu" tarot card in Les Gommes, serve to reinforce what are the even more important structural affinities of technique: in the tower paintings and descriptions the introduction of the principle of repetition with variation. Especially in the light of the later discussion of Andy Warhol's and Roy Lichtenstein's pop art, it becomes apparent that Robbe-Grillet's fictional techniques developed along a line parallel to what might be termed an early use of serialism in de Chirico, evolving towards its highly sophisticated employment and refinement in Lichtenstein and Warhol.

Redundancy increases in Robbe-Grillet's later novels, especially in Projet, as does his depiction of visual serialism, the code-breaking impetus remaining close to his style of visual manipulation but relying less on the structures of memory, dream, and imagination, and more on formal techniques linked with pop art. Even the insistence on surface structure rather than deep structure is consistent with the two-dimensional picture plane most prominent in Lichtenstein's pop art. In La Maison serial imagery does not contain such references to pop art per se, but rather concentrates on visual technique, for example the shifts in the appearance of the flower petal as it is seen through a "lens," the foot of the champagne glass, or the repeated fragmentation of a glass or a number of glasses. Visual iconography, such as the image of Maïa, contains many references to the destruction of a pictorial code external to the text, while the pop art style posters in Projet are generated by the text and evolve within it; external visual sources exist as affinities, but not as direct references.

The occurrence of narrative codes involving the popular genres of pornography, the spy novel, and the detective story, are more pronounced in Projet than in La Maison, undoubtedly because they serve to reinforce by negative example, Robbe-Grillet's attack on certain ideologies, attacks that even in La Maison are subordinate to the reformulation of aesthetic codes.

The nature and findings of this inquiry, presented briefly so far, do not require a further recapitulation of specific results. Nevertheless, it is apparent that certain conclusions can be drawn and should be made explicit. By stages Robbe-Grillet developed visual techniques which are essential to his narratives. These techniques act on both the deep and surface structures in the early novels, although in La Maison and Projet the surface structure is the dominant element through which innovative ways of manipulating all aspects of visual presentation are demonstrated. The elements, techniques, and subjects (that is the thematic and iconographical topics) manifest parallelisms with experimental attitudes and works by a number of twentieth century artists such as de Chirico, Magritte, and Roy Lichtenstein, and movements or groups such as surrealism and pop art. Besides Robbe-Grillet's contacts with and interest in these manifestations of modern and contemporary art, the French author displays a desire to break down traditional narrative codes in a manner similar to the artists' subversion of previous pictorial conventions. These conventions, and the visual language which constitutes them, are a form of highly organized perception that makes acceptable their comparison with the codification of narrative. To suggest, as does E.S. Shaffer, that "the inarticulate visual arts," must be submitted to an analysis according to semiotic codes formulated on the notion of painting as "writing" serves the purposes of literary critics, but ignores the highly organized conventions which are integral to the visual arts.[1] Robbe-Grillet, like the artists mentioned above, rejects accepted mimetic canons and the usual passivity of the reader/observer, although he respects the integrity of the visual art form. The discarded canons in both literature and painting imply, nonetheless, a world view based on certain ideas of space and time, subject-object relationships, and Cartesian categories of causality, a world which in the most general terms is ordered, understandable and presentable. Robbe-Grillet's fiction resembles the painting of de Chirico, Magritte, Lichtenstein and others, in the attempt to establish new aesthetic codes relating to a different Weltanschauung, with new expectations and tasks for the reader/observer. For these reasons, the affinities which can be established encompass formal devices and thematic preferences, and at times even shared ideological stances.

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[1] E.S. Schaffer, "Editor's Note: Laocoön and the Languages of the Arts," Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook, 4 (1982), xiv.

It must be stressed that Robbe-Grillet's main purpose, differing from that of certain surrealists like André Breton, is not to attempt a direct change in the world, but foremost to revolutionize the forms of narrative. Psychological, philosophical, and political statements which can be read into the texts, for example post-Freudian definitions of man, Heideggerian assumptions about the nature of Being and of knowing, anti-bourgeois suggestions contained in images, situations, and actions, are either consequent or at best parallel to narrative innovation.

While it is a justified commonplace of criticism that creators are not the best commentators on their own works, it has become evident in the course of this inquiry that Robbe-Grillet is not only remarkably astute in bringing to light techniques and intentions of other writers, but also highly lucid and perspicacious in describing his ends and means. If taken in their totality and with the necessary critical attention, his own declarations, although they may be programmatic and self-serving at times, prove to be most helpful in the unravelling of his new techniques and of their functional meaning. Moreover, the very evolution in these techniques and in their implications, which can be traced from Un Régicide to Projet pour une révolution à New York, allows this inquiry to lay a basis for studies into the directly collaborative works constructed by Robbe-Grillet with the passive or active participation of artists such as Magritte, Delvaux, Hamilton, Johns, and

Rauschenberg. That remains, however, a task for the future.

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